

Mount Alexander Shire Settlement Planning Assessment February 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters of the place known as Mount Alexander Shire. We recognise their ongoing living culture and the important role they continue to play in the life of this region.

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Executive Summary

Mount Alexander Shire's population is growing and the demand for housing is increasing. It is important that Council plans to accommodate projected population growth over a 15 year period and provides clear direction on locations where growth should occur.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Understand current and future demographic changes in Mount Alexander Shire within the context of housing and settlement planning.
- Understand whether there is a minimum 15-year supply of residential land to accommodate forecast population growth across the Shire. This is to consider constraints that limit land for future residential use and development (as part of the land supply analysis) including bushfire, flooding and drainage, and contaminated land.
- Consider the findings of the land supply and demand analysis in reviewing the existing strategic directions for settlement and housing in the Shire.
- Provide crucial information to future strategic planning settlement and housing projects.

Key policy considerations for the Assessment include:

State and regional planning policy context

- There must be sufficient residential land at a municipal level to meet forecast population and housing demand for at least a 15 year period.
- Housing growth is to be directed into existing settlements.
- Population growth and development is to be directed to low bushfire risk locations.
- Castlemaine is identified at a state and regional level as a key

employment and service hub in the region where growth is to be managed and supported.

- Harcourt is identified at a state and regional level as a town that can accommodate growth.

Local planning context

- The Council Plan 2021-2025 includes specific strategies for settlement planning and housing.
- The Mount Alexander Planning Scheme includes a Municipal Planning Strategy that sets out key strategic directions for settlement and housing, and other key considerations including environmental and landscape values, environmental risks and amenity, and built environment and heritage.
- Current strategic directions include:
 - Castlemaine is identified for infill and higher density development as well as urban expansion in specific areas.
 - Residential development is to be limited in unsewered small settlements and townships with effluent disposal limitations.
 - Growth is to be encouraged in Harcourt and Newstead.
 - Urban expansion is to be limited in Maldon.
- A number of local plans have been prepared over the past 20 years that guide and manage settlement planning and housing in the Shire.

Key population, household and housing data findings for the Assessment include:

- The population of the Mount Alexander Shire grew over the period 2006 to 2021 at an average annual rate of 1.24%. Approximately 65% of the population live in urban areas and almost half of the population live in Castlemaine or Campbells Creek.
- Mount Alexander Shire has an ageing population in comparison to Victoria as a whole. The median age in the Shire increased from

47 in 2011 to 51 years of age in 2021, and the proportion of people aged over 60 increased since 2011. As at the 2021 Census, the median age of the population in Victoria as a whole was 37 years of age.

- As at the 2021 Census, the average household size in the Shire is 2.1 persons per household. While most households in the Shire are family households, the number of lone person households is increasing and makes up 33.2% of all households as at the 2021 Census. This is higher than the proportion of lone person households in Victoria as a whole, being 24.7% of households.
- Most family households reside in separate houses (detached dwellings) with the majority of these being 'couple family no children'.
- With the majority of the dwelling stock in the Shire being detached dwellings (96.2%) and three and four bedroom houses (71.6%) there is a mismatch between the dwelling supply and household demand.
- 9% of dwellings in the Shire were in housing stress (see definition in Section 4.3) as of the 2021 Census.
- 12% of all dwellings sold in the Shire in 2021 were affordable dwellings (see definition in Section 4.3), decreasing from 45% of all dwellings sold in 2015.
- 61% of all rentals in the Shire in 2021 were affordable rentals (see definition in Section 4.3), decreasing from 79% of all rentals in 2015.

Key population, household and housing forecasts include:

- The population of the Mount Alexander Shire is projected to increase by 0.97% each year until 2041 when the population is projected to be 24,316 people.
- It is anticipated that Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to accommodate a greater proportion of new population in the Shire up until 2041, accounting for almost half of the projected population growth during this time. Harcourt is projected to account for almost 20% of the population growth.

- The proportion of people aged between 0 and 19 and 35 to 69 is expected to reduce over time to 2041, while the proportion of people aged over 80 is anticipated to increase over time.
- The proportion of lone households is projected to increase over time to 2041, while the proportion of couple family with children households is expected to reduce.
- The average number of persons per dwelling across the Shire is forecast to decline from 2016 to 2041 from 2.18 persons per household to 2.05 persons per household.
- The number of unoccupied dwellings are projected to increase from 2016 to 2041 by 270, an increase of 19.11%.
- The number of detached dwellings/ separate houses is expected to continue as the prevailing dwelling structure in the Shire, making up 94.96% of all dwelling stock by 2041. Medium density housing is projected to increase slightly however it is projected to make up just 4.3% of dwelling stock in 2041.

Key findings of the Shire-wide Land Supply and Demand Assessment include:

- There is more than 30 years of land supply in the Shire for residential development. This meets the state planning policy that requires councils to plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15 year period on a municipal basis (rather than town by town).
- The total supply across the Shire up until 2041 is 4,342 lots, with the majority of this supply provided within Castlemaine and Campbells Creek, both accounting for around 57 per cent of residential land in the Shire. Other supply is provided through smaller isolated parcels spread throughout various townships.
- The forecast demand is 2,750 lots through to 2041.
- Supply of land in smaller townships (including Elphinstone, Taradale and Guildford) is relatively low but has sustained low annual demand. Small changes in demand however could reduce the number of years supply relatively quickly.

- Castlemaine (excluding Campbells Creek) has the highest levels of demand (annual average of 46 lots a year) and the second lowest years of supply (around 25 years).
- Harcourt is the most constrained township in terms of supply, with 20 years of residential land supply to meet forecast demand.

Summary of current strategic directions for settlement planning and key issues and opportunities for towns in the Shire:

- The current strategic directions for settlement planning in the Shire remain relevant, having regard to the planning policy context, population, household and housing data and forecasts and the municipal land supply and demand assessment.
- Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to be the main population centre in the Shire into the future. This is supported by the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014) that identifies Castlemaine as having regional significance in terms of growth.
- Maldon will continue to be a key retail centre in the Shire to support residents in the town and surrounding rural areas, and will also continue to serve an important tourism role. Urban expansion will continue to be limited in Maldon due to bushfire hazards surrounding the town and to protect significant landscapes.
- Newstead will continue to be a local community centre providing services to residents in the town and surrounding rural areas. Growth in Newstead is to continue to be encouraged, however this needs to be carefully managed through further strategic work.
- Harcourt will continue to be a local community centre and place for growth. This is to be guided and managed through Plan Harcourt (2020) and its implementation via Planning Scheme Amendment C94malx. Tourism and agricultural opportunities will also continue to be encouraged in and around Harcourt.
- Taradale and Elphinstone will continue to be small villages where growth is to be encouraged subject to reticulated sewerage.

1. Introduction

1.1 What is the Mount Alexander Shire Settlement Planning Assessment?

The Mount Alexander Shire Settlement Planning Assessment provides an assessment of the existing overarching framework for how residential growth is to be managed in the municipality over the next 15 years. The Assessment is to be used to inform future strategic planning work including town-based settlement plans and housing strategies.

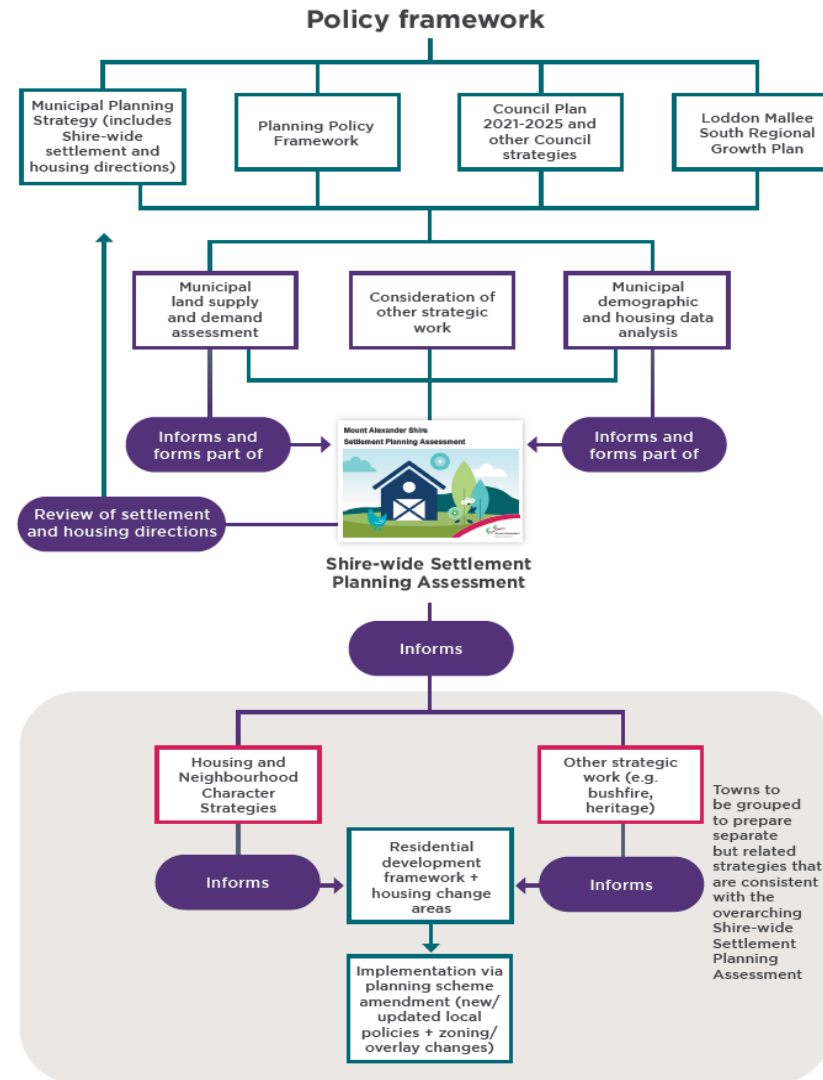
The Assessment provides a high-level analysis of:

- The policy context including state, regional and local planning policy directions and strategic influences, and relevant Ministerial Directions and planning practice notes.
- Population, household and housing trends in the Shire.
- Population and housing forecasts for the Shire.
- Municipal land supply and demand.
- Issues and opportunities relating to housing and settlement planning for the towns in the Shire.
- The current strategic directions for settlement (townships, settlement and growth) at Clause 02.03-1 of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

The key outputs of the Assessment are:

- A land supply and demand analysis.
- An implementation plan for future strategic planning work including town-based settlement plans and housing and neighbourhood character strategies. The recommendations of these projects are to be implemented via a planning scheme amendment/s.

FIGURE 1: COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT PLANNING WORK



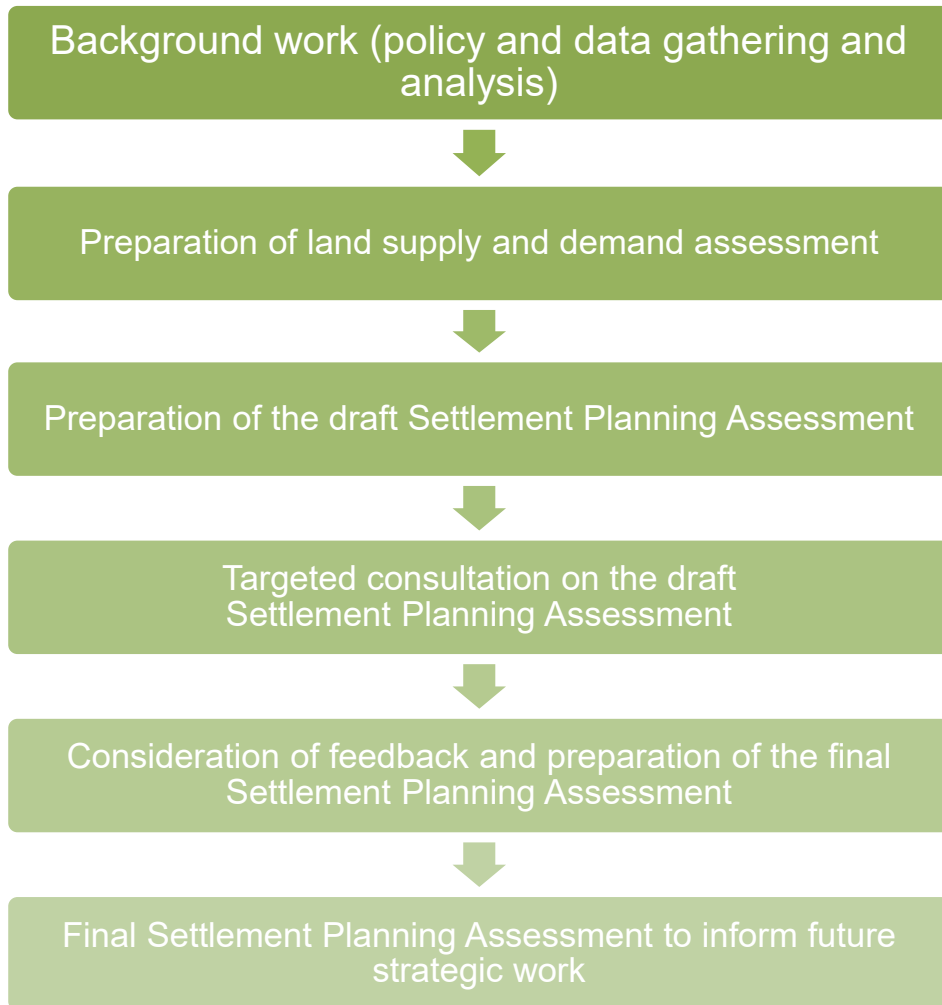
1.2 Why are we undertaking this Assessment?

Mount Alexander Shire's population is growing and the demand for housing is increasing. It is important that Council plans to accommodate projected population growth over a 15 year period and provides clear direction on locations where growth should occur (Clause 11.02-1S of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme).

The objectives of the project are to:

- Understand current and future demographic changes in Mount Alexander Shire within the context of housing and settlement planning.
- Understand whether there is a minimum 15-year supply of residential land to accommodate forecast population growth across the Shire. This is to consider constraints that limit land for future residential use and development (as part of the land supply analysis) including bushfire, flooding and drainage, and contaminated land.
- Consider the findings of the land supply and demand analysis in reviewing the existing strategic directions for settlement and housing in the Shire.
- Provide crucial information to future strategic planning settlement and housing projects.

1.3 Project staging



1.4 Targeted consultation

Targeted consultation with key government departments and agencies, service providers and planning referral authorities occurred on the draft Settlement Planning Assessment from mid-September to November 2022. Feedback received was considered in the preparation of the final Assessment.

Information about the project was shared with the wider community via Council's engagement platform, SHAPE Mount Alexander. Given that the Assessment is informed by data and policy analysis and will not result in any changes to the planning scheme, public consultation is to occur on town-based plans and housing strategies, including the Housing and Neighbourhood character strategy for Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton that is being prepared concurrently to this Assessment and other strategic planning work outlined in Section 8.

2. State and Regional Policy Context

2.1 State legislation, plans and strategies

Plan Melbourne 2017-2050

Plan Melbourne is the Victorian Government's metropolitan planning strategy designed to guide future growth of Melbourne to the year 2050.

While it primarily applies to metropolitan Melbourne, the key messages expressed by the principles and objectives of Plan Melbourne are broadly applicable to other towns and regional centres. The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan is applicable to Mount Alexander Shire and reflects this.

Plan Melbourne 2014 was refreshed by the State Government in 2017 to ensure it addressed issues previously omitted, such as climate change, housing affordability and transport priorities.

The broad objectives of Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 are:

- A productive city that attracts investment, supports innovation and creates jobs;
- Providing housing choice in locations close to jobs and services;
- Providing an integrated transport system that connects people to jobs and services and goods to market;
- A distinctive and liveable city with quality design and amenity;
- A city of inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods;
- A sustainable and resilient city; and
- Regional Victoria is productive and sustainable and supports jobs and economic growth.

Plan Melbourne is guided by the principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods. The 20-minute neighbourhood is all about 'living locally'— giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home, with safe cycling and local transport options.

Homes for Victorians 2017

Homes for Victorians 2017 is the Victorian Government's plan to increase and renew public housing and address homelessness. It includes five main initiatives:

1. Supporting people to buy their own home.
2. Increasing the supply of housing through faster planning.
3. Promoting stability and affordability for renters.
4. Increasing and renewing social housing stock.
5. Improving housing services for Victorians in need.

Changes to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) sets out the procedure for preparing and amending the Victorian Planning Provisions and planning schemes. The Act was amended on 1 June 2018 to facilitate affordable housing by introducing an objective in the Act, defining 'affordable housing' and clarifies that Responsible Authorities can enter into agreements with landowners and others under Section 173 of the Act for the provision of affordable housing as part of a development.

2.2 State planning policy

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme: State Planning Policy

The following state planning policy clauses of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme guide this assessment and future work in settlement planning and housing. It is acknowledged that this is a summary only and there are other state planning policies that guide this work also.

Clause 11.01-1S Settlement

Objective

To promote the sustainable growth and development of Victoria and deliver choice and opportunity for all Victorians through a network of settlements.

Relevant strategies

Develop sustainable communities through a settlement framework offering convenient access to jobs, services, infrastructure and community facilities.

Support sustainable development of the regional centres of Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Bairnsdale, Benalla, Castlemaine, Colac, Echuca, Gisborne, Hamilton, Kyneton, Leongatha, Maryborough, Portland, Sale, Swan Hill, Warragul/Drouin and Wonthaggi.

Ensure regions and their settlements are planned in accordance with their relevant regional growth plan.

Guide the structure, functioning and character of each settlement taking into account municipal and regional contexts and frameworks.

Create and reinforce settlement boundaries.

Deliver networks of high-quality integrated settlements that have a strong identity and sense of place, are prosperous and are sustainable by:

- Building on strengths and capabilities of each region across Victoria to respond sustainably to population growth and changing environments.
- Developing settlements that will support resilient communities and their ability to adapt and change.

- Balancing strategic objectives to achieve improved land use and development outcomes at a regional, catchment and local level.
- Preserving and protecting features of rural land and natural resources and features to enhance their contribution to settlements and landscapes.
- Encouraging an integrated planning response between settlements in regions and in adjoining regions and states in accordance with the relevant regional growth plan.

Providing for appropriately located supplies of residential, commercial, and industrial land across a region, sufficient to meet community needs in accordance with the relevant regional growth plan.

Improving transport network connections in and between regional cities, towns and Melbourne.

Limit urban sprawl and direct growth into existing settlements.

Clause 11.02-1S Supply of urban land

Objective

To ensure a sufficient supply of land is available for residential, commercial, retail, industrial, recreational, institutional and other community uses.

Relevant strategies

Ensure the ongoing provision of land and supporting infrastructure to support sustainable urban development.

Ensure that sufficient land is available to meet forecast demand.

Plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15 year period and provide clear direction on locations where growth should occur.

Residential land supply will be considered on a municipal basis, rather than a town-by-town basis.

Planning for urban growth should consider:

- Opportunities for the consolidation, redevelopment and intensification of existing urban areas.

- Neighbourhood character and landscape considerations.
- The limits of land capability and natural hazards and environmental quality.
- Service limitations and the costs of providing infrastructure.

Restrict rural residential development that would compromise future development at higher densities.

Clause 11.03-1S Activity centres

Objective

To encourage the concentration of major retail, residential, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments into activity centres that are highly accessible to the community.

Relevant strategies

Build up activity centres as a focus for high-quality development, activity and living by developing a network of activity centres that: Provides different types of housing, including forms of higher density housing.

Support the role and function of each centre in the context of its classification, the policies for housing intensification, and development of the public transport network.

Encourage a diversity of housing types at higher densities in and around activity centres.

Clause 11.03-6S Regional and local places

Objective

To facilitate integrated place-based planning.

Relevant strategies

Integrate relevant planning considerations to provide specific direction for the planning of sites, places, neighbourhoods and towns.

Consider the distinctive characteristics and needs of regional and local places in planning for future land use and development.

Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire planning

Policy application

This policy must be applied to all planning and decision making under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 relating to land that is:

- Within a designated bushfire prone area;
- Subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay; or
- Proposed to be used or developed in a way that may create a bushfire hazard.

Objective

To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.

Relevant strategies

Protection of human life: Give priority to the protection of human life by:

- Prioritising the protection of human life over all other policy considerations.
- Directing population growth and development to low risk locations and ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.
- Reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfire through the consideration of bushfire risk in decision making at all stages of the planning process.

Bushfire hazard identification and assessment: Identify bushfire hazard and undertake appropriate risk assessment by:

- Applying the best available science to identify vegetation, topographic and climatic conditions that create a bushfire hazard.
- Considering the best available information about bushfire hazard including the map of designated bushfire prone areas prepared under the Building Act 1993 or regulations made under that Act.
- Applying the Bushfire Management Overlay to areas where the extent of vegetation can create an extreme bushfire hazard.
- Considering and assessing the bushfire hazard on the basis of:

- Landscape conditions - meaning conditions in the landscape within 20 kilometres (and potentially up to 75 kilometres) of a site;
- Local conditions - meaning conditions in the area within approximately 1 kilometre of a site;
- Neighbourhood conditions - meaning conditions in the area within 400 metres of a site; and
- The site for the development.

Consulting with emergency management agencies and the relevant fire authority early in the process to receive their recommendations and implement appropriate bushfire protection measures.

Ensuring that strategic planning documents, planning scheme amendments, planning permit applications and development plan approvals properly assess bushfire risk and include appropriate bushfire protection measures.

Not approving development where a landowner or proponent has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the relevant policies have been addressed, performance measures satisfied or bushfire protection measures can be adequately implemented.

Settlement planning: Plan to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities and prioritise protection of human life by:

- Directing population growth and development to low risk locations, being those locations assessed as having a radiant heat flux of less than 12.5 kilowatts/square metre under AS 3959-2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2009).
- Ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas assessed as a BAL-LOW rating under AS 3959-2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2009) where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.
- Ensuring the bushfire risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure will not increase as a result of future land use and development.

- Achieving no net increase in risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure, through the implementation of bushfire protection measures and where possible reducing bushfire risk overall.
- Assessing and addressing the bushfire hazard posed to the settlement and the likely bushfire behaviour it will produce at a landscape, settlement, local, neighbourhood and site scale, including the potential for neighbourhood-scale destruction.
- Assessing alternative low risk locations for settlement growth on a regional, municipal, settlement, local and neighbourhood basis.
- Not approving any strategic planning document, local planning policy, or planning scheme amendment that will result in the introduction or intensification of development in an area that has, or will on completion have, more than a BAL-12.5 rating under AS 3959-2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2009).

Areas of biodiversity conservation value: Ensure settlement growth and development approvals can implement bushfire protection measures without unacceptable biodiversity impacts by discouraging settlement growth and development in bushfire affected areas that are important areas of biodiversity.

Clause 14.01-1S Protection of agricultural land

Objective

To protect the state's agricultural base by preserving productive farmland.

Relevant strategies

Limit new housing development in rural areas by: Directing housing growth into existing settlements.

Clause 15.01-1S Urban design

Objective

To create urban environments that are safe, healthy, functional and

enjoyable and that contribute to a sense of place and cultural identity.

Relevant strategies

Require development to respond to its context in terms of character, cultural identity, natural features, surrounding landscape and climate.

Clause 15.01-2 Building design

Objective

To achieve building design and siting outcomes that contribute positively to the local context, enhance the public realm and support environmentally sustainable development.

Relevant strategies

Ensure a comprehensive site analysis forms the starting point of the design process and provides the basis for the consideration of height, scale, massing and energy performance of new development.

Ensure development responds and contributes to the strategic and cultural context of its location.

Minimise the detrimental impact of development on neighbouring properties, the public realm and the natural environment.

Improve the energy performance of buildings through siting and design measures that encourage:

- Passive design responses that minimise the need for heating, cooling and lighting.
- On-site renewable energy generation and storage technology.
- Use of low embodied energy materials.

Clause 15.01-3S Subdivision design

Objective

To ensure the design of subdivisions achieves attractive, safe, accessible, diverse and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Clause 15.01-4S Healthy neighbourhoods

Objective

To achieve neighbourhoods that foster healthy and active living and community wellbeing.

Clause 15.01-5S Neighbourhood character

Objective

To recognise, supply and protect neighbourhood character, cultural identity and sense of place.

Relevant strategies

Ensure the preferred neighbourhood character is consistent with medium and higher density housing outcomes in areas identified for increased housing.

Clause 16.01-1S Housing supply

Objective

To facilitate well-located, integrated and diverse housing that meets community needs.

Relevant strategies

Ensure that an appropriate quantity, quality and type of housing is provided, including aged care facilities and other housing suitable for older people, supported accommodation for people with disability, rooming houses, student accommodation and social housing.

Increase the proportion of housing in designated locations in established urban areas (including under-utilised urban land) and reduce the share of new dwellings in greenfield, fringe and dispersed development areas.

Encourage higher density housing development on sites that are well located in relation to jobs, services and public transport.

Identify opportunities for increased residential densities to help consolidate urban areas.

Facilitate diverse housing that offers choice and meets changing

household needs by widening housing diversity through a mix of housing types.

Encourage the development of well-designed housing that:

- Provides a high level of internal and external amenity.
- Incorporates universal design and adaptable internal dwelling design.

Support opportunities for a range of income groups to choose housing in well-serviced locations.

Plan for growth areas to provide for a mix of housing types through a variety of lot sizes, including higher housing densities in and around activity centres.

Clause 16.01-2S Housing affordability

Objective

To deliver more affordable housing closer to jobs, transport and services.

Relevant strategies

Improve housing affordability by:

- Ensuring land supply continues to be sufficient to meet demand.
- Increasing choice in housing type, tenure and cost to meet the needs of households as they move through life cycle changes and to support diverse communities.
- Promoting good housing and urban design to minimise negative environmental impacts and keep costs down for residents and the wider community.
- Encouraging a significant proportion of new development to be affordable for households on very low to moderate incomes.
- Increase the supply of well-located affordable housing by:
- Facilitating a mix of private, affordable and social housing in suburbs, activity centres and urban renewal precincts.
- Ensuring the redevelopment and renewal of public housing stock better meets community needs.

Facilitate the delivery of social housing by identifying surplus government land suitable for housing.

Clause 16.01-3S Rural residential development

Objective

To identify land suitable for rural residential development.

Relevant strategies

Manage development in rural areas to protect agriculture and avoid inappropriate rural residential development.

Encourage the consolidation of new housing in existing settlements where investment in physical and community infrastructure and services has already been made.

Demonstrate need and identify locations for rural residential development through a housing and settlement strategy.

Ensure planning for rural residential development avoids or significantly reduces adverse economic, social and environmental impacts by:

- Maintaining the long-term sustainable use and management of existing natural resource attributes in activities including agricultural production, water, mineral and energy resources.
- Protecting existing landscape values and environmental qualities such as water quality, native vegetation, biodiversity and habitat.
- Minimising or avoiding property servicing costs carried by local and state governments.
- Maintaining an adequate buffer distance between rural residential development and animal production.

Ensure land is not zoned for rural residential development if it will encroach on high quality productive agricultural land or adversely impact on waterways or other natural resources.

Discourage development of small lots in rural zones for residential use or other incompatible uses.

Encourage consolidation of existing isolated small lots in rural zones.

Ensure land is only zoned for rural residential development where it:

- Is located close to existing towns and urban centres, but not in areas that will be required for fully serviced urban development.
- Can be supplied with electricity, water and good quality road access.

Clause 16.01-5S Residential aged care facilities

Objective

To facilitate the development of well-designed and appropriately located residential aged care facilities

Relevant strategies

Recognise that residential aged care facilities contribute to housing diversity and choice, and are an appropriate use in a residential area.

Recognise that residential aged care facilities are different to dwellings in their purpose and function, and will have a different built form (including height, scale and mass).

Encourage planning for housing that:

- Delivers an adequate supply of land or redevelopment opportunities for residential aged care facilities.
- Enables older people to live in appropriate housing in their local community.

Provide for a mix of housing for older people with appropriate access to care and support services.

2.3 State planning practice notes and Ministerial directions

Planning Practice Notes

Planning Practice Notes (PPNs) are published by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and “provide ongoing advice about the operation of the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP) and planning schemes as well as a range of planning processes and topics.” (DELWP 2018). There are a total of 59 Planning Practice Notes (PPNs) listed on DTPs website, with all except two (2) being updated since January 2014, and a large number having been reviewed in 2015 and 2018. Of these, the following PPNs specifically relate to housing and settlement planning.

Planning Practice Note 90: Planning for housing (December 2019)

PPN90 provides information and guidance about how to plan for housing growth and protect neighbourhood character to ensure a balanced approach to managing residential development in planning schemes. PPN90 is to be read with PPN91. PPN90 outlines the process involved in creating a residential development framework, with its key inputs being a local housing strategy, neighbourhood character strategy and an understanding of heritage, environmental, landscape and land capability constraints. This involves identifying housing change areas (minimal, incremental and substantial).

Planning Practice Note 91: Using the residential zones (December 2019)

PPN91 provides information and guidance about how to use the residential zones to implement strategic work, use local polices and overlays with the residential zones and make use of the key features of the residential zones. PPN91 is to be read with PPN90.

Planning Practice Note 37: Rural Residential Development (June 2015)

PPN37 was reviewed in June 2015 and provides guidance when planning for rural residential uses and development.

Planning Practice Note 64: Local Planning for Bushfire Protection

PPN64 provides guidance on local planning for bushfire protection and how to prepare schedules to the Bushfire Management Overlay.

Ministerial Directions

Section 7(5) of the *Planning & Environment Act 1987* states: “The Minister may issue directions or guidelines as to the form and content of any planning scheme or planning schemes.” and Section 12(B) states that a planning scheme review must give consideration to ministerial directions or guidelines.

The Form and Content of Planning Schemes

The Ministerial Direction for the form and content of planning schemes was gazetted under Section 7(5) of the Act and has been amended three times in the last year, most recently in October 2018 following the adoption of Amendment VC148 which significantly restructure the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP). The Ministerial Direction gives twenty-six (26) directions regarding the correct format, layout and content required in all Victorian planning schemes.

Given the currency and number of recent amendments, any proposed changes to the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme must respond to the requirements of this Ministerial Direction.

Amendment VC141 updated the VPPs to the style and format based on the revised Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes (updated April 2017) issued under section 7(5) of the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*.

2.4 Regional strategies

Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014 was implemented alongside Plan Melbourne 2014, and is a plan for the region to guide the growth and change in the area for the next 30 years. The Plan applies to the municipalities of Mount Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire and Macedon Ranges Shire.

The vision for this plan is for these communities to enjoy regional liveability with urban accessibility, and offer vibrant, innovative, sustainable and connected communities with a diversity of lifestyles, heritage, natural environment and agricultural landscapes.

The plan seeks to achieve the following for the region:

1. Establish a framework for strategic land use and settlement planning that can accommodate growth within ecologically sustainable development principles.
2. Identify important economic, environmental, social and cultural resources to be preserved, maintained or developed.
3. Provide direction for accommodating growth and change including residential, employment, industrial, commercial, agriculture and other rural activities.
4. Show which areas of land can accommodate growth and which are to be maintained for other uses.
5. Identify opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure, providing an essential contribution to the long-term sustainability of the region.

Harcourt is identified as a key town in the growth of the Loddon Mallee South Region, as it is strategically located adjacent to the Calder rail and road corridor, as well as being 30km from Bendigo and 7km from Castlemaine. Plan Harcourt (2020) provides the framework for accommodating future planned growth and provides recommendations on rezoning and planning policy.

Dhelkunya Dja: Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034

Dhelkunya Dja provides direction for the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation ('the Corporation') and the Traditional Owner Land Management Board. It is used to build partnerships with key stakeholders and to increase the involvement of Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners in the effort to achieve the Corporation's goals. The Country Plan recognises the importance of the cultural heritage of the Traditional Owners of Dja Dja Wurrung Country - the significant places and landscapes, the stories and language, the customs and practices and the responsibilities for looking after Country.

Taungurung Country Plan

The Taungurung Country Plan is based on key aspirations and an action plan that is used to guide the Taungurnug Land and Waters Council, partners and stakeholders. Key priorities for action include cultural heritage and caring for country.

2.5 Regional planning policy

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme: Regional Planning Policy

Clause 11.01-1R Settlement - Loddon Mallee South

Relevant strategies

Manage and support growth in Castlemaine, Gisborne, Kyneton and Maryborough as employment and service hubs that reinforce the network of communities in the region.

Maintain non-urban breaks between settlements.

Summary of state and regional policy context

- There must be sufficient residential land at a municipal level to meet forecast population and housing demand for at least a 15 year period.
- Housing growth is to be directed into existing settlements.
- Population growth and development is to be directed to low bushfire risk locations.
- Castlemaine is identified at a state and regional level as a key employment and service hub in the region where growth is to be managed and supported.
- Harcourt is identified at a state and regional level as a town that can accommodate growth.

3. Local policy context

3.1 Council Plan 2021-2025: Working together for a healthy, connected shire

The Council Plan 2021-2025 sets out the strategic direction and priorities for Council over this four-year period. The Council Plan identifies a number of strategic objectives and strategies relating to settlement planning and housing, specifically within Pillar 2: A flourishing environment for nature and people. This includes:

- Objective: We are focused on the housing affordability challenge in our community.

Strategies:

- Ensure there is sufficient residential land that caters for the existing and future community needs.
- Support state-wide initiatives to increase affordable housing supply.
- Encourage diverse housing options and infill residential development in appropriate locations.
- Objective: Our community is growing in harmony with nature.

Strategies:

- Manage sustainable township growth and development.

3.2 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 sets out what Council will do to protect, promote and improve community health and wellbeing in the Shire, in partnership with government, health and community service organisations. Relevant objectives and strategies to settlement planning include:

- 1.2.4: Participate in Elevating ESD (Environmentally Sustainable Development) Targets Planning Scheme Amendment Project to

improve the performance of subdivisions, new housing developments, and precinct structure plans to improve a range of healthy living outcomes.

- 2.3: Ensure protections for farming and agricultural land are in place to support local food systems and the health of our community.
- 3.1.2 Enhance urban planning and design of the built environment and open spaces to encourage more frequent walking and cycling.

3.3 Mount Alexander Planning Scheme: Municipal Planning Strategy and Local Planning Policy

Planning Scheme Amendment C95 amended the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme as part of the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) reform program called 'Smart Planning' and the 'Planning Policy Framework translation' process.

The amendment translated the Local Planning Policy Framework to incorporate the policies into the Planning Policy Framework. The changes are structural only and do not alter the intent of the existing local planning policy contained in our planning scheme.

The translation introduced:

- A newly-formatted Municipal Planning Strategy at Clause 2 of the Planning Scheme. This is based on the former Municipal Strategic Statement and focusses on strategic priorities and includes the context, vision, strategic directions and frameworks plans for our Shire.
- Local Planning Policy within the Planning Policy Framework (Clauses 10 to 19), nested under relevant State planning policy themes. This means that the state, regional and local policies are now listed together in the Scheme below their relevant theme.

Municipal Planning Strategy: Context (Clause 02.01)

Mount Alexander Shire is located in the historic goldfields of central Victoria approximately 110 kilometres north of Melbourne. In 2018, the estimated resident population of the Shire was 19,510 people. Approximately half of the Shire's population live in Castlemaine. The balance of the population resides in Maldon, Harcourt, Newstead, Chewton, Guildford, Taradale and Elphinstone, smaller settlements and the Shire's rural areas.

The Shire is known for its heritage townships, buildings and places, which are of local, state and national significance. The notable and extensive Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is a cultural landscape of national heritage significance. Maldon was recognised by the National Trust of Victoria as Australia's first Notable Town in 1966. Significant landscapes include Mount Alexander goldfields, Mount Tarrengower, Mount Alexander, Mount Consultation, Barfold and Muckleford gorges, the Guildford plateau, Vaughan Springs and Lake Cairn Curran.

The main employment sectors within the Shire are agriculture (including horticulture), manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, community services and tourism. Tourism is a growing industry, built around heritage, gardens, festivals and events. The bushland is also a most important recreational and tourism asset for the Shire, contributing to its unique character as a destination.

Manufacturing and meat processing are key employment sectors in the Shire. Other important sectors are construction, machinery and equipment manufacturing and automotive/specialised vehicles. The Shire's economy is transitioning towards service sectors and its industrial areas are being used for a greater diversity of uses than in the past. New opportunities exist in the expansion of industries such as the modified motor vehicle sector, the arts, tourism, special engineering and the "land repair" sectors.

The Shire is within the Murray Darling basin catchment, with the Campaspe River catchment generally east of Mount Alexander supplying Lake Eppalock. The western two-thirds of the municipality is in the Loddon River catchment, with the Cairn Curran Reservoir on the Shire's western boundary.

Settlement (Clause 02.03-1)

Introduction

Castlemaine (including Campbell's Creek and Diamond Gully) is the main population centre in Mount Alexander Shire, accounting for about 50 per cent of the Shire's total population. It is the key administrative and commercial centre for the Shire.

Diamond Gully situated three kilometres to the south west of the Castlemaine town centre will be Castlemaine's primary urban growth area. There is also potential for urban expansion in the McKenzie Hill area.

Subdivision and residential development in Diamond Gully needs to be balanced against the protection of significant vegetation and prioritising the protection of human life in areas at risk from bushfire.

Maldon is the second largest township. The town has been recognised for its heritage significance. The retail centre in High Street, Maldon, is the second largest retail centre in the Shire. It provides local shopping needs for the township and the rural district in the north western part of the Shire and serves an important tourism role.

Newstead is a local community centre, on the Loddon River. It provides services to residents of the township itself and surrounding rural area.

Harcourt is a local community centre, identified as a place for population growth in the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan. Harcourt is located next to Mount Alexander and is well placed to take advantage of tourism opportunities. The area is well known for its apple and pear orchards, providing a significant contribution to the State's apple supply.

Taradale is a small village at the southern edge of the Shire along the Calder corridor. The town is located along Back Creek which feeds into the Coliban River. A significant landmark of the town is the Taradale Viaduct along the Melbourne to Bendigo railway line, which reaches a height of approximately 36 metres.

Elphinstone is a small village along the Calder Corridor. The town has good road transport connections, being located where the Pyrenees Highway intersects with the Calder Highway. The railway line also runs through the centre of the town, creating a physical separation.

There are also small rural communities at Baringhup, Fryerstown,

Guildford, Metcalfe, Sutton Grange, Vaughan and Yapeen. The settlement pattern and Crown Allotment structure of the Shire is diverse, with small townships and farming areas that were developed in response to the demands of the gold rush era. This development has left a legacy of dispersed small allotments, which have proven popular for hobby farming and rural lifestyle activities.

The Shire has at least 15 years' supply of zoned residential land, and an additional 15 years of 'future' or unzoned land stocks. In recent years, most of the new residential lots created in the Shire have been from small, infill subdivisions. Accommodating the forecast population growth is likely to require a shift towards larger subdivisions and increased urban densities, particularly in Castlemaine.

Council is encouraging balanced development that builds on the Shire's existing settlement pattern with a regional urban focus on Castlemaine. As a result, growth is encouraged in serviced towns with transport connections between them reinforced to facilitate movement and access.

Harcourt also has potential for growth because it is fully serviced and strategically located close to the Calder Freeway and railway line.

Council's strategic directions on the settlement and growth of townships are:

- Discouraging the rezoning of land for urban purposes outside the urban/township boundaries.
- Encouraging infill and higher density development in the Shire's towns, particularly in Castlemaine.
- Limiting residential densities in unsewered small settlements and townships with effluent disposal limitations.
- Supporting urban consolidation and expansion at Castlemaine.
- Concentrating growth in Diamond Gully as Castlemaine's primary urban growth area.
- Encouraging growth in townships such as Harcourt, Newstead, Elphinstone and Taradale.
- Limiting urban expansion in Maldon.

Environmental and landscape values (Clause 02.03-2)

Biodiversity

From the time of European settlement until the late 1940s, much of the original native vegetation of the Shire was cleared, initially for mining and later for agriculture. Since the 1940s, there has been almost no net loss in total area of tree cover, although native grasslands and understory vegetation have suffered through the introduction of exotic species and nutrients in the soil.

Native vegetation now covers 51 per cent of the Shire, including large areas designated for forestry, farming and other land-uses.

The Shire contains 23 Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), of which 15 are endangered. Of all the area covered by native vegetation in the Shire, 11 percent has a Bioregional Conservation Status of 'endangered'. Endangered EVCs are located along the Muckleford Valley, around Mount Alexander and to the south of Newstead.

High densities of threatened flora species exist in the areas around Castlemaine and Harcourt. There are also 11 nationally threatened fauna species found within the Shire. High densities of threatened fauna species exist in the Yandoit Hills and Gower areas.

The road reserves throughout the Shire contain vegetation of important conservation value, providing habitat and acting as linear reserves.

Council's strategic directions for biodiversity are:

- Minimising the impact of development at the urban-forest interface that pose a threat to native flora and fauna.
- Protecting biodiversity values on public land, including road reserves.
- Protecting remnant native vegetation particularly in and around Castlemaine, Moonlight Flat and Lady Gully.
- Protecting wildlife corridors from rural living development.

Landscapes

Areas of high landscape and environmental value have been identified at Mount Alexander and Barfold Gorge, in the areas immediately surrounding the townships of Castlemaine and Maldon, and in Vaughan and Glenluce.

Hilltops and ridgelines are an important element of the Shire's rural character. Development along these natural features and the Shire's other significant landscapes need to be carefully managed to minimise any visual and environmental impacts.

Strategic directions for landscapes are:

- Discouraging development that is on or close to prominent ridges and hilltops to protect views and areas of remnant vegetation.

Environmental risks and amenity (Clause 02.03-3)

Floodplains

Floodplains exist around the Loddon River and major watercourses in the Shire, including Muckleford Creek, Forest Creek and Barkers Creek. Newstead has historically been vulnerable to flooding from the Loddon River and is currently protected by levee banks.

Significant flood events occurred in the Shire in 2010, 2011 and 2012, including in the townships of Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton, which were affected by riverine flooding.

Council's strategic directions for floodplains are:

- Protecting life, property and infrastructure from the risk of flooding.
- Supporting land use and development initiatives for flood mitigation works.
- Discouraging intensive forms of development or incompatible uses on flood prone land.

Soil contamination

The Shire's gold mining and industrial heritage has left a legacy of contaminated soils in some parts of the Shire, although most areas that

are potentially contaminated have not been formally identified or assessed.

Council's strategic directions on contaminated land are:

- Seeking the rehabilitation of degraded land, including former mining and industrial sites.
- Seeking the remediation of contaminated land if it could be used for a sensitive use.

Erosion and salinity

The intensive gold mining of the 19th century resulted in significant clearing and soil disturbance around waterways, creek flats and hilltops, making these areas more susceptible to erosion. Much of this land is unsuitable for further development.

Parts of the Shire are affected by salinity, reflecting the poor condition of the Loddon and Campaspe water catchments. Salinity is an issue in the catchment of the Cairn Curran Reservoir. The salinity has been caused by vegetation clearing, which has resulted in rising water tables, waterlogging and high salt concentrations.

Council's strategic directions in relation to salinity and erosion are to:

- Encourage the revegetation of areas that contribute to salinity by planting deep rooted perennial species and indigenous vegetation.
- Minimise the drainage of saline and nutrient rich water from irrigated and urban areas.
- Minimise salinity and the loss of topsoil to protect agricultural productivity and biodiversity.

Bushfire

The Shire faces significant urban bushfire risk at the fringes of all of its main townships, namely Castlemaine, Maldon, Newstead and Harcourt. The highest bushfire risks to Castlemaine are to the north, west, south and south east. There is some vacant land that is zoned for residential development close to these areas.

There are also areas of high bushfire risk in smaller settlements such as Chewton, Fryerstown and Taradale, and the rural areas of the Shire.

Council's strategic directions to address bushfire risk are:

- Directing urban development to the lowest risk locations.
- Avoiding development in areas of high bushfire risk where defensible space cannot be provided.
- Minimising biodiversity impacts when creating areas of defensible space around new dwellings.

Amenity impacts

Most of the Shire's industrial areas either abut or are located close to residential areas, potentially causing conflict between industry and sensitive uses. This includes avoiding or limiting the effects of spray drift of chemicals.

Council's strategic directions for managing amenity impacts are:

- Avoiding locating new sensitive uses where the impact of agricultural chemical spray drift on amenity and health cannot be minimised.
- Protecting the horticultural industry from other agricultural production activities in the surrounding areas.

Built environment and heritage (Clause 02.03-5)

Heritage and character

There is extensive evidence of Aboriginal occupation and activity throughout the Shire. These sites include traditional and cultural places, ceremonial and camping sites, mining sites, rock wells, middens and ovens.

Today remnant gold diggings are of major cultural heritage significance. The Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is on the state and national heritage lists.

Castlemaine was the centre of government administration on the goldfields and became a hub for social activity, including commerce,

transport, education, health services and religious observance. It has a high degree of intact and authentic 19th century buildings that reflect those functions. There are also historic buildings in many of the smaller towns in the Shire, with Maldon being one of the most intact 19th century towns in Australia.

The residential areas typically have a spacious feel, derived from the generous lot sizes, building setbacks and wide road reserves. Urban areas often lack formal road and footpath treatments, which give these areas an informal character.

There are well defined strip shopping centres in Castlemaine and Maldon. These centres have a traditional compact form, with buildings that have direct frontage to streets and laneways.

The rural appearance and character of the Shire is a strong element of its appeal for residents and visitors. It is the combination of many physical elements that contribute to this character.

Strategic directions for heritage and character are:

- Protecting and conserving the historic fabric and maintain the integrity of places of heritage and cultural heritage significance.
- Supporting the development of rural land that does not detract from the appearance and character of the area.
- Conserving and enhancing the existing scale, density, character and appearance of Maldon's earlier residential areas.
- Encouraging residential and commercial development that respects the existing form and character of streetscapes and allows for contemporary architectural expression.
- Encouraging industrial development that makes a positive contribution to the form and character of streetscapes and allows for contemporary architectural expression.
- Managing the form and appearance of medium density and infill housing to protect the heritage and residential character of the Shire's towns.
- Encouraging development at highway entrances that respect township character and heritage values.
- Encouraging development along the entrances to all towns to be

landscaped with species consistent with the existing and planned landscape for each town.

Sustainable development

The type, location and form of housing has a major influence on sustainability outcomes in terms of energy use and other resources. The consolidation of development into existing urban areas is usually the most sustainable form of development from an economic, social and environmental perspective.

Council's strategic directions for sustainable development are:

- Encouraging energy efficiency in the planning and design of urban communities and development to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Maximising opportunities for passive heating and cooling in subdivision design, such as lot orientation.
- Encouraging whole-of-water cycle solutions that may allow re-use of treated effluent or re-use of stormwater to minimise total water use.
- Supporting developments that incorporate systems for filtering stormwater run-off, including stormwater management options that retain water and vegetation.

Housing (Clause 02.03-6)

The Shire's population is ageing and household sizes are getting smaller, The Shire's towns have a range of transport, economic and social infrastructure to support an increase in population and a diversity in housing types. Adequate, appropriate and affordable housing are basic factors affecting quality of life. Recent trends indicate that housing is becoming less affordable and that there is a mismatch between the needs of the existing community and the provision of housing within the municipality.

Single detached dwellings are expected to make the greatest contribution to the Shire's new housing stock in the foreseeable future, although Castlemaine is ideally placed to create different housing stock within the

existing urban area.

Council's strategic directions for housing are:

- Encouraging increased residential densities within 20 minutes walking distance from town centres or close to retail, health and community facilities.
- Encouraging the adaptation of existing building stock for varying forms of accommodation, including shop top living or warehouse-style living.
- Encouraging large developments to include a proportion of social housing within the development.
- Encouraging alternative residential design concepts such as cluster housing.
- Encouraging new subdivisions to have a diversity of lot sizes, including smaller lots to promote affordability.
- Supporting the development of smaller dwellings to respond to the changing housing needs of the community.
- Encouraging larger developments to provide a mix of housing types and sizes, including one and two-bedroom accommodation that are suitable for smaller households

Rural residential development

Opportunities to provide for new rural living development in the Shire are limited. The only areas specifically designated for rural living are in the central part of the Shire around Castlemaine. Some low density residential land exists in Maldon. Small Crown allotments make a substantial contribution to the supply of land that is potentially available for rural living purposes, although the development of these lots can undermine the potential of the land for agriculture and can impact on environmental qualities and the natural resource base.

Strategic directions for rural residential development:

- Discouraging rural living areas where isolated from services and infrastructure.

Economic development (Clause 02.03-7)

Business

The Castlemaine Commercial Centre is the main activity centre in the Shire and provides a range of retail, office and government services. The retail core is focused around Mostyn Street and Barker Street. Most of the Shire's smaller towns have pockets of commercial development that date from the mid-19th and early 20th centuries and have potential for infill commercial development.

Council's strategic directions for business are:

- Promoting the role of the Castlemaine Commercial Centre as the Shire's primary local service centre.
- Encouraging the redevelopment of under-utilised sites in the retail core of Castlemaine and under-utilised commercial buildings in the Shire's small towns.
- Maintaining the commercial viability of the Maldon town centre by accommodating a range of retail, commercial and public utility land uses.
- Discouraging out-of-centre development that would undermine the viability of existing retail areas and entrench car-based travel.

Industry

Industrial land in the Shire is concentrated in Castlemaine. There is limited land available for expansion, although additional land has recently been released in Wesley Hill. Industrial areas are also located in Harcourt and Maldon. Harcourt and Elphinstone have potential for industrial development due to their strategic location near the Calder Highway. However, Elphinstone requires servicing upgrades before long-term opportunities can be opened up. New industrial locations at Harcourt and Elphinstone will reduce the amount of industry related traffic travelling through Castlemaine, which is creating amenity issues in some residential areas and the town centre.

Council's strategic directions for industry are:

- Preserving existing industrial land and buffers to safeguard opportunities for the expansion of existing industries or

establishment of new industries.

- Encouraging the diversification of the agricultural base of the Shire to increase resilience to change.
- Providing locations for industrial development adjacent to a highway or major road, and away from existing or proposed residential areas.
- Encouraging industry to locate within existing and planned industrial estates where all physical infrastructure is available and which are readily accessible to transport networks.
- Discouraging the establishment of industry that may have offsite amenity impacts on land outside of existing and planned industrial estates.
- Supporting the provision of sewerage and other infrastructure to Elphinstone to allow for the development of an industrial precinct in the town.

Tourism

The tourism industry is built around the heritage of the Shire's goldfields, including the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. Key drawcards to the Shire include nature-based tourism, wineries and cideries in the Harcourt Valley, local produce events culinary, arts and cultural attractions, and the 'village' offerings of Maldon, Guildford and Newstead. Tourism activity is also influenced by visitation to adjoining municipalities such as Greater Bendigo and tourism initiatives that relate to the broader Goldfields' region.

Council's strategic directions for tourism are:

- Encouraging tourist facilities and services that are compatible with and add value to the existing built and natural attractions of the municipality.
- Encouraging tourist development to be sited and designed to minimise impact on the natural environment, landscapes or productive agricultural land.

Transport (Clause 02.03-8)

The Shire has extensive road and rail transport links to Melbourne and Bendigo via the Calder Highway and the Melbourne-Swan Hill railway line. Other major centres linked to Mount Alexander include Ballarat (Midland Highway) and Maryborough (Pyrenees Highway).

Transport and movement are important issues for the Shire due to its low density settlement patterns, high levels of commuting, and connections with larger regional centres such as Bendigo, and the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Walking and cycling are popular forms of transport and recreation.

Council's strategic directions for transport are:

- Connecting smaller towns and settlements with Castlemaine.
- Supporting opportunities for expanding public transport in the future.
- Supporting off-road trails and rail trails that serve both recreational and transport purposes for walkers and cyclists by providing off-road access to towns in the Shire.

Infrastructure (Clause 02.03-9)

Development infrastructure

Most of the Shire's urban areas are serviced with reticulated water, sewerage, gas, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure. Some existing drainage infrastructure has heritage significance. It is anticipated that existing water supply infrastructure will be able to meet most of the water supply needs for the projected population growth of the Shire.

Some augmentation of existing sewerage infrastructure will be required in Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Harcourt to accommodate future growth. Elphinstone, Taradale and Guildford are currently unsewered towns.

The Shire has community infrastructure assets, including public health facilities, schools and cultural and recreation facilities.

Council's strategic direction for infrastructure are:

- Supporting wastewater management in Taradale, Elphinstone and Guildford to accommodate projected growth.
- Preventing residential development in rural areas that can significantly increase costs of infrastructure maintenance and service provision.
- Encouraging the expansion of regional health, educational and cultural facilities.
- Providing new physical or community infrastructure in new residential communities by way of developer contributions.
- Encouraging development in the General Residential Zone to be connected to reticulated sewerage.

Open space

The Shire is well endowed with formal and informal open spaces that provide opportunities for sporting activities, passive recreation, events and relaxation. Barkers Creek, Forest Creek and the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens are important open spaces in Castlemaine.

Council's strategic directions on open spaces are:

- Linking open spaces and movement networks.
- Providing open space links along drainage corridors and creeks through residential subdivision.
- Require contributions for open space for new residential subdivisions.

Strategic framework plans (Clause 02.04)

Framework plans for the Shire, Maldon, Newstead, Harcourt, Taradale and Elphinstone are located at this clause. The town framework plans are provided in Section 7.

FIGURE 2 MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

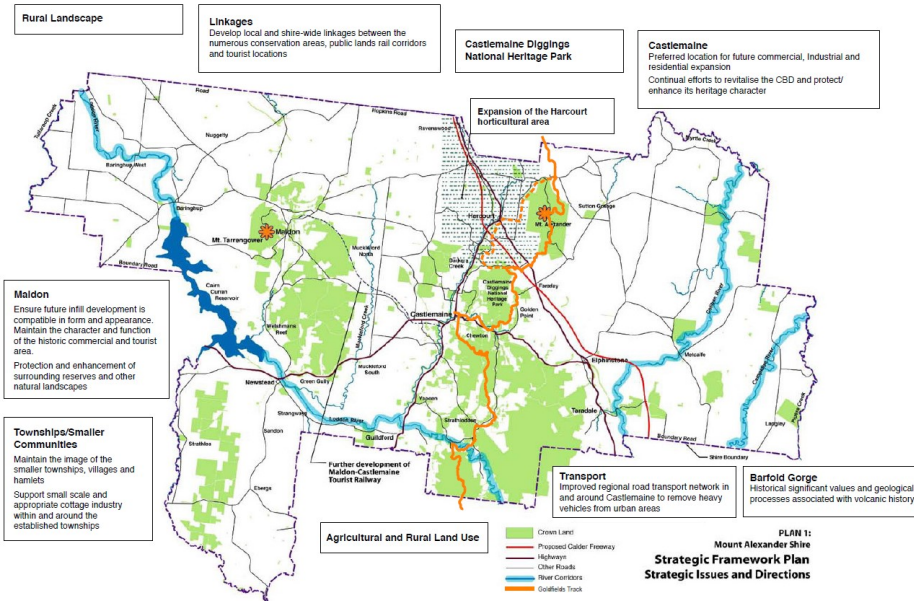
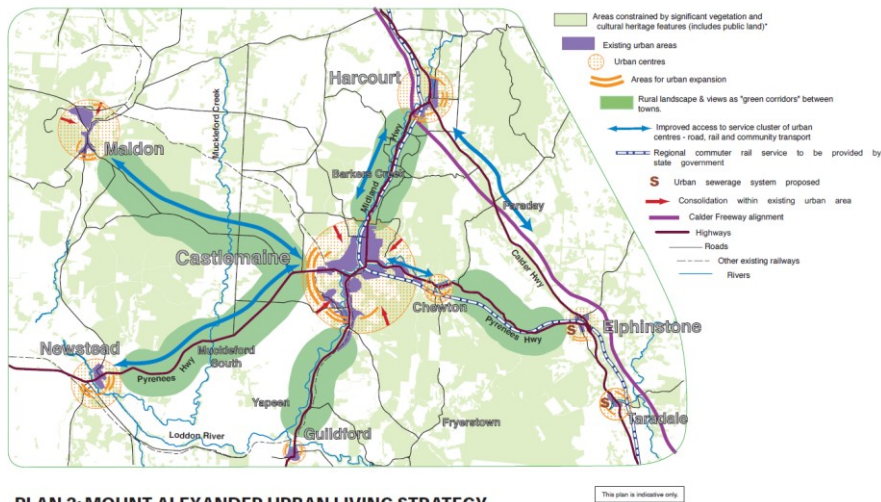


FIGURE 3 MOUNT ALEXANDER URBAN LIVING STRATEGY PLAN: CLUSTER, CONNECT AND CONSOLIDATION



PLAN 2: MOUNT ALEXANDER URBAN LIVING STRATEGY Cluster, Connect & Consolidation

Settlement (Clause 11.01-1)

Clause 11.01-2L-01 Settlement - General strategy

Prevent ribbon-like development along main roads.

Clause 11.01-1L-02 Castlemaine and Diamond Gully – Strategies

Encourage residential expansion to the west and south of Castlemaine in the McKenzie Hill, Diamond Gully and Campbells Creek areas.

Provide vehicle and shared bicycle and pedestrian connection for good connectivity between Diamond Gully, the Castlemaine Township centre and Campbells Creek.

Support commercial facilities including medical centre/child care centre to service the needs of the Diamond Gully community.

Cluster development in the southern residential greenfield precinct where the opportunity exists to create shared defensible space.

Provide hard edges for residential development within the Diamond Gully area to respond to threats from bushfire.

Provide open space corridors along watercourses.

Encourage subdivision and development of low density areas in Diamond Gully.

Provide urban buffers between landfills and new development to manage gas risks.

Encourage tourist and commercial uses on land abutting the Pyrenees Highway (Duke Street).

Protect the residential and heritage character of Midland Highway (Barker Street) by confining commercial development to existing commercial and industrial zones abutting the highway.

Support a highway business precinct along the Pyrenees Highway (Elizabeth Street) from the Campbells Creek Bridge to Johnstone Street.

Promote highway business in Precincts E4 and HBS, along the Midland Highway (Johnstone Street).

Enhance Castlemaine’s laneways to facilitate greater movement around the town and provide links between places of activity and interest.

The Castlemaine Framework Plan is located at this clause. This is

provided in Section 7.

Clause 11.01-1L-03 Happy Valley/ Moonlight Flat – Strategies

Encourage the use of indigenous plants where revegetation and/or landscaping is proposed.

Establish new open space areas and corridors that reflect local landscape character and native vegetation.

Provide buffer zones containing native vegetation along all watercourses.

Link habitat areas to provide for the movement of wildlife.

Ensure that any development or use of land adjacent to Forest Creek and Moonlight Creek safeguards and enhances the health of the creeks.

Preserve the flood storage functions of Forest Creek and environs.

Develop an open space corridor based on Forest Creek and Moonlight Creek.

Protect the landscape, environmental and habitat values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.

Discourage use and development adjacent to the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park that would damage its heritage and nature conservation values, character or setting.

Protect the heritage and cultural landscape significance of Pennyweight Flat, Pennyweight Flat Cemetery and the Moonlight Flat/ Lady Gully area.

Protect the open landscape character of Pennyweight Flat, Happy Valley and Moonlight Flat.

Create public open space areas that link with Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, Forest Creek and Moonlight Creek.

Ensure that use and development does not have an adverse impact on views and vistas across Pennyweight Flat/Happy Valley, including to and from Hundredweight Hill.

Support opportunities for low density housing in Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat area.

Support serviced residential development at the southern end of Happy Valley Road consistent with the Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat Structure

Plan.

Provide for fully serviced residential development within Precinct 1.

The Happy Valley/ Moonlight Flat Structure Plan and Happy Valley Road Structure Plans are located at this clause.

Planning for Places (Clause 11.03)

Clause 11.03-1L-01 Activity centres – Castlemaine – Strategies

Discourage development within the Castlemaine Commercial Centre that does not allow for active frontages.

Encourage the redevelopment of prominent corner sites on Barker Street.

Encourage additional infill commercial development along Forest and Barker streets.

Develop Frederick Street as a major pedestrian link connecting new development sites in the Castlemaine Commercial Centre.

Improve the appearance and function of existing laneways in the Castlemaine Commercial Centre to:

- Make them more pedestrian friendly.
- Make them more visually attractive, including through retaining any significant heritage features.
- Encourage their use as mid-block links.

Ensure that shading and other seasonal comfort measures for pedestrian spaces are provided in development sites.

Support the re-development of the former bus depot site on the corner of Barker and Forest streets for commercial development.

Clause 11.03-1L-02 Activity Centres – Maldon – Strategies

Support the development of a single supermarket business on commercially zoned land in Vincents Road.

Housing (Clause 16.01)

Clause 16.01-3L Rural residential development - Strategies

Discourage the rezoning of land to Rural Living Zone that cannot provide a net environmental gain based on the principles of the Rural Living Strategy.

Encourage rural living development in the Rural Living Zone to the north, west and south of Castlemaine.

Discourage rural living development within the Farming Zone and outside areas already zoned for rural living.

Discourage development in the Faraday/Golden Point area and near Chewton.

Prevent the sprawl of low density residential land uses along the Calder Highway, throughout the Harcourt horticultural area, and on the fringes of towns along the Calder, Midland and Pyrenees highways.

Support rural living development where road infrastructure, services and stormwater, management are provided as part of the proposed development.

Provide sealed roads and drainage infrastructure to low density residential development unless alternative treatments are desirable depending on the preferred character of an area.

Ensure that rural living lots are of a size that can retain and treat all effluent on site.

3.4 Local plans and strategies

The following plans and strategies inform settlement planning in the Shire. These continue to be relevant and will not be superseded by this Assessment.

Plan Harcourt (2020)

The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan and the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme recognise Harcourt as a small town that can

accommodate planned growth in the region. Plan Harcourt was prepared to ensure that future growth and change is carefully planned to promote and preserve local place values, and to recognise the highly productive agricultural operations around the town. Plan Harcourt includes the Harcourt Framework Plan that forms the basis for future changes to the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme. This includes policy directions and a graphical map that designates future growth and change in the township, including the rezoning of land and the application of overlays. Community and other stakeholder engagement played an important part in informing the Plan.

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Review 2019 (Ethos Urban)

Section 12 (1)(a) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (the Act) requires a planning authority (Council) to review its planning scheme within the term of each Council. Guidance is provided by the Continuous Improvement Review Kit 2006 and Planning Practice Note 32: Review of Planning Schemes.

The 2019 review of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme was a policy-neutral audit of all local Planning Scheme content and an analysis of additional documents relevant to the operation of the Planning Scheme. This includes local plans and strategies such as the Council Plan 2017-2021, Local Planning Policy content, and Schedules to Zones, Overlays and Particular Provisions. The Report summarises the significant amount of reform that has occurred in the Victorian planning system since the previous planning scheme review in 2014. This includes reforms initiated under the Smart Planning program, such as changes to the Planning Policy Framework (PPF) and Victoria Planning Provisions (VPPs), as well as amendments to the Form and Content of Planning Schemes. The report provides a consolidated set of recommendations (an 'Implementation Plan'), and ranks these recommendations according to priority. A total of 47 recommendations were made by Ethos Urban. There were no changes to the scheme directly as a result of this review. Rather, the review has informed the strategic planning work program and priorities.

Domestic Wastewater Management Action Plan 2018-2022

The Domestic Wastewater Management Plan outlines Council's approach to protect public health, the environment, and local amenity from the risks posed by domestic wastewater. Domestic onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic tanks), are used in rural parts of the Shire (Farming Zone and Rural Living Zone), as well as within the centres of Taradale, Elphinstone, Guildford, Yapeen, Welshmans Reef, Vaughan, Fryerstown and Baringhup. The absence of reticulated sewer in these towns constrains their growth as the smaller the property, the lesser the area that can be used for treating and retaining wastewater onsite.

Diamond Gully Structure Plan (2016)

The Diamond Gully Structure Plan outlines the vision for the Diamond Gully area, which encompasses 182 hectares of land on the south-western edge of Castlemaine. The Structure Plan consists of both a strategic document and graphical plan that consider the existing features and constraints to future development, sets out the areas for future residential development and the preferred levels of density, movement and traffic networks to be provided and spaces for public open space and wetlands/retarding basins.

Taradale Residential Options Study (2013)

The Taradale Residential Options Study was an internal document prepared to understand the future development options for the town (no sewerage or sewerage) and the potential development scenarios under these two options. Consideration was given to existing characteristics, the planning context, implications of being located in a potable water supply catchment and land capability. The study found that a fully integrated sewerage scheme would be cost prohibitive and recommended that consideration be given to an alternative pressurised system.

Housing Needs and Opportunities in Mount Alexander Shire: Discussion Paper (2012)

The Housing Needs and Opportunities discussion paper was prepared by Swinburne Institute for Social Research. The paper provides an overview of housing needs in the Shire and an analysis of Council's roles and functions in relation to housing, and identifies options for Council to seek increased supply of social and affordable housing.

Urban Development Program Regional Residential Report: Shire of Mount Alexander (2012)

The Urban Development Program for Regional Victoria provides an analysis of supply and demand for residential and industrial land across parts of regional Victoria. For the Shire, the analysis was undertaken to identify the location and associated lot yield of future residential land stocks. The analysis noted that future residential land stocks are not zoned to support immediate 'normal' residential development, and rezoning and structure planning processes are required before normal residential development proceeds.

Mount Alexander Residential Land Demand and Supply Analysis (2010)

The Mount Alexander Residential Land Demand and Supply Analysis was completed to allow the Shire and Council to make informed, evidence based decisions that will ensure that Council is meeting its statutory obligations relating to ensuring there is at least a 15 year supply of land available for development. While this work was superseded by the Urban Development Program Regional Residential Report (2012) it contains detailed assessment work of land supply in the main towns in the Shire.

Chewton Urban Design Framework (2008) and Addendum (2010)

The Chewton Urban Design Framework (UDF) was prepared to assist the Shire in managing and planning for the growth of Chewton. Key drivers of change included the town being connected to reticulated sewerage several years prior and the completion of the Calder Freeway, which would have impacts on traffic movement through the town. The UDF identified a vision and key themes for Chewton, including preserving the historic character, landscape setting and village atmosphere and consolidating residential development within the existing township. The Addendum was prepared two years later to support the implementation of the UDF, given the time that had lapsed since it was prepared.

Castlemaine Residential Strategy (2005)

The Castlemaine Residential Strategy was prepared following the finalisation of the Urban Living Strategy and provides residential planning objectives for Castlemaine. The Strategy identifies McKenzie Hill and Diamond Gully as the key areas to accommodate residential growth between 2004 and 2021.

Maldon Urban Design Framework (2004)

The Maldon Urban Design Framework provided an overall urban design framework masterplan for Maldon, and included specific actions, broad policies and recommendations to achieve objectives relating to cultural landscape and heritage.

Urban Living Strategy (2004)

The Urban Living Strategy provides the current strategic direction for settlement in the Shire. The Strategy outlines the preferred urban growth model for the Shire being 'Cluster Connect and Consolidation', also known as 'Cluster Connect and Calder Corridor'. The model encourages balanced development that builds on the Shire's existing settlement pattern with a regional urban focus on Castlemaine.

The Urban Living Strategy (2004) predicted significant population and household growth for the Shire however actual population growth has

generally been below this level predicted (particularly between 2004 and 2011). While the actual number of total dwellings in the Shire is similar to projections in the Urban Living Strategy, the development realised within each township has differed. As a result, much of the land that was identified for future residential development/expansion at that time has not yet been developed. This is particularly the case for land in Harcourt, Campbells Creek, Diamond Gully and other parts of Castlemaine.

Summary of local policy context

- The Council Plan 2021-2025 includes specific strategies for settlement planning and housing.
- The Mount Alexander Planning Scheme includes a Municipal Planning Strategy that sets out key strategic directions for settlement and housing, and other key considerations including environmental and landscape values, environmental risks and amenity, and built environment and heritage.
- Current strategic directions include:
 - Castlemaine is identified for infill and higher density development as well as urban expansion in specific areas.
 - Residential development is to be limited in unsewered small settlements and townships with effluent disposal limitations.
 - Growth is to be encouraged in Harcourt and Newstead, and Elphinstone and Taradale (subject to provision of reticulated sewerage).
 - Urban expansion is to be limited in Maldon.
- A number of local plans and have been prepared over the past 20 years that guide and manage settlement planning and housing in the Shire.

4. Population, household and housing data

4.1 Population and age demographics

As of the 2021 Census the population of Mount Alexander Shire was 20,253 (ABS 2021). Between 2006 and 2021, the average annual population growth of the Shire was 1.24%. This is lower than the state of Victoria's average annual population growth over this period of 2.12%.

TABLE 1 POPULATION CHANGE IN CENSUS YEARS 2006 - 2021

Year	2006	2011	2016	2021
Mount Alexander Shire	17,068	17,592	18,762	20,253
Castlemaine (SA2)	n/a	9,733	10,583	11,352

Source: REMPLAN Community 2022 and ABS 2021

The distribution of the population in 2011 and 2016 throughout the Shire's urban areas shows that the majority of the population reside in Castlemaine (38% of the population in 2011 and 39% of the population in 2016). In both years, approximately 65% of the Shire's population resided in urban areas. While the figures for Guildford and Elphinstone show a population decline, this is most likely due to the combination of the reduction in household size and low dwelling construction within the respective township boundaries, and does not account for the population growth that it is likely to have occurred within the rural surrounds of these town (counted in 'Elsewhere in Shire').

TABLE 2 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE SHIRE (2011, 2016, 2021)*

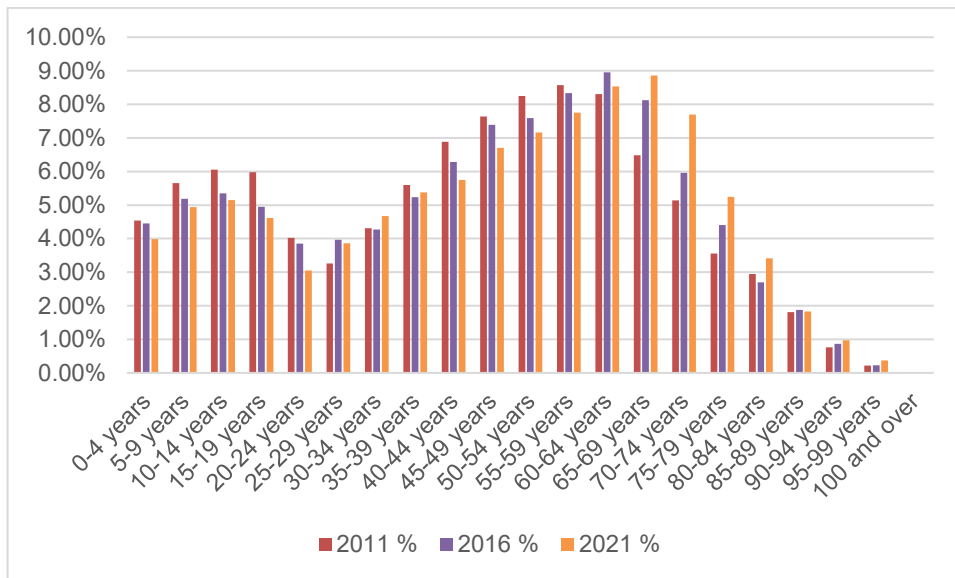
Township/area	2011	2016	2021
Castlemaine (includes SSC Castlemaine and McKenzie Hill)	6,732	7,343	7,528
Campbells Creek	1,435	1,691	1,936
Chewton	433	470	576
Maldon	1,195	1,230	1,317
Newstead	517	579	661
Harcourt	519	606	681
Elphinstone	178	167	208
Taradale	127	145	133
Guildford	244	206	240
Elsewhere in Shire	6,205	6,311	6,924
Total	17,585	18,748	20,224

* This is based on forecast areas/township boundaries and not the SSC areas. The SSC may include rural land surrounding the township.

Source: REMPLAN Community 2023

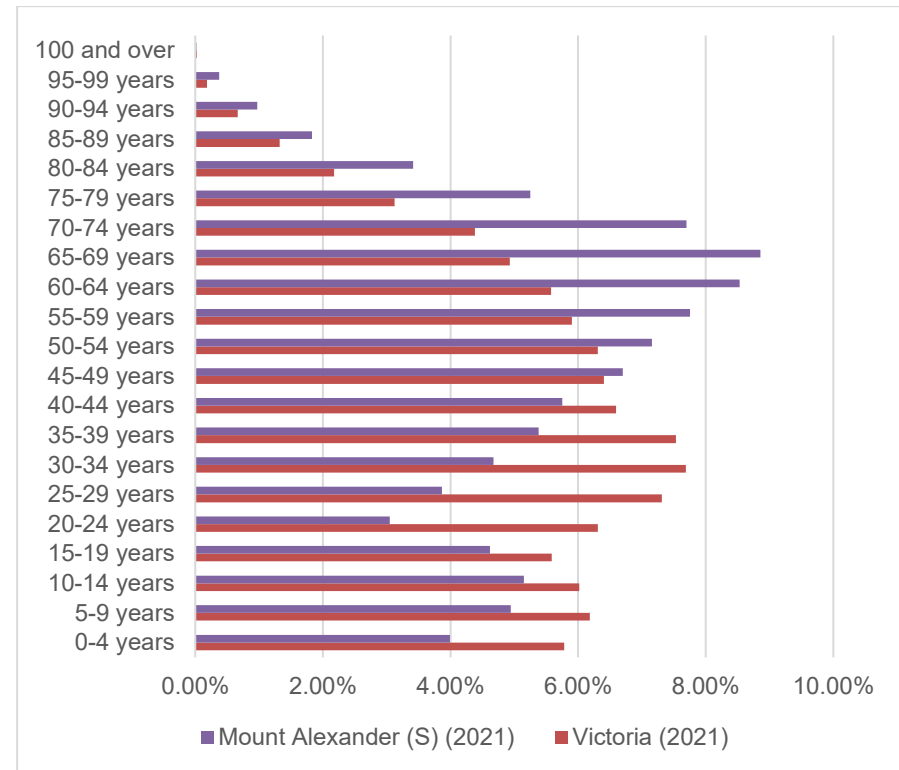
The population of the Mount Alexander Shire is ageing, with the median age in the Shire increasing from 47 in 2011 to 51 years of age in 2021. The proportion of people aged over 60 has increased since 2011, while the proportion of young people aged between 0 and 24 years of age has reduced since 2011. As at the 2021 Census, the highest proportion of the population were aged between 65 and 69. The Shire's age profile differs from the state of Victoria as a whole. As at the 2021 Census, Victoria's median age is much younger at 37 years of age, and there is a greater proportion of people aged 0 to 44 years.

FIGURE 4 POPULATION BY AGE COHORT 2011, 2016 & 2021



Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016, 2021

FIGURE 5 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION: COMPARISON BETWEEN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE AND VICTORIA AS A WHOLE



Source: ABS Census 2021

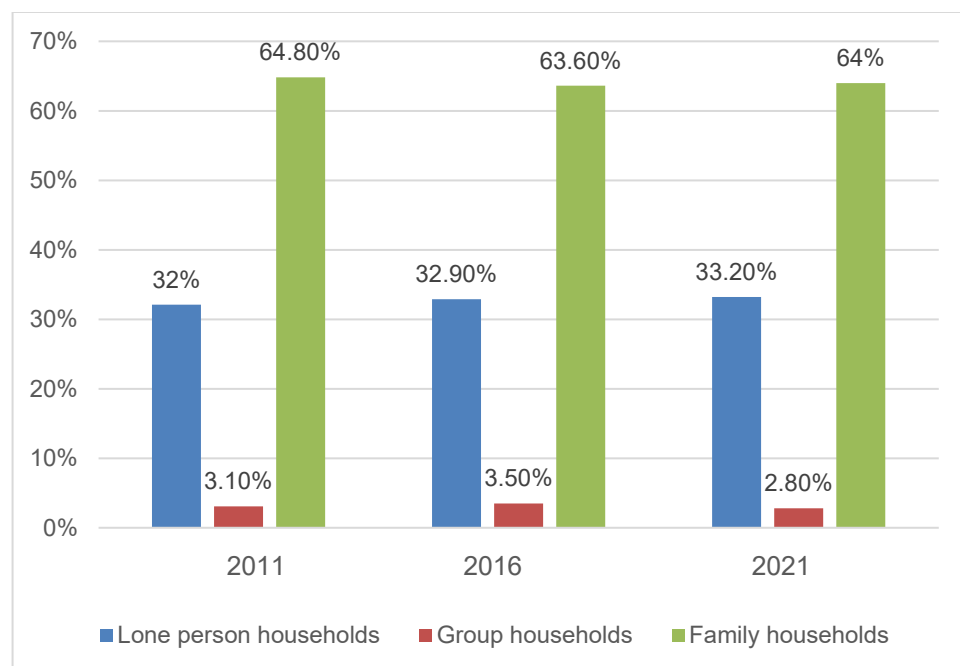
4.2 Households

Household composition: Historic change

Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of households being lone person households in Mount Alexander Shire increased from 32% to 33.2% (increasing by a total of 505 households), while the proportion of households made up of families decreased slightly from 64.8% to 64%.

As at the 2021 Census, the household composition in Victoria as a whole includes a greater proportion of family households (70.8%) and a lower proportion of lone person households (24.7%).

FIGURE 6 SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE



Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016, 2021

TABLE 3 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION: HISTORIC CHANGE

	2011		2016		2021	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Lone person households	2280	32%	2426	32.90%	2785	33.20%
Group households	218	3.10%	259	3.50%	239	2.80%
Family households	4600	64.80%	4691	63.60%	5369	64%
Total households	7,098		7,376		8,393	

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016, 2021

Household types

As at the 2021 Census, the most common household type in Mount Alexander Shire is 'lone persons' (32.4%), followed by 'couple family with no children' (31.6%) and 'couple family with children' (21.3%). From 2016 to 2021, 'Lone persons' households increased by 16.4% from 2,325 to 2,706 (REMPPLAN Housing, 2023).

Household composition (by dwelling type)

Most family households reside in separate houses or detached dwellings, with the majority of these being 'couple family with no children' (32.3%). The most common household type in medium density dwellings is 'lone persons' (77.8%).

TABLE 4 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION BY DWELLING TYPE

Family Household Composition (Dwelling)	Separate house	Medium Density	High Density	Caravan, cabin, houseboat	Other	Total
Couple Family with no children	2,612	29	0	0	0	2,641
Couple Family with children	1,766	12	0	0	0	1,778
One Parent Family	807	11	0	0	4	822
Other Family	69	0	0	0	0	69
Lone persons	2,500	193	0	10	3	2,706
Groups	220	3	0	0	0	223
Visitors only household	116	0	0	3	0	119
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: REMPLAN Housing (2023)

Household size (people per dwelling): Historic change

The average household size in Mount Alexander Shire is 2.2 persons as at the 2021 Census. This has reduced from 2.3 persons at the 2011 Census. This is lower to the average household size in Victoria as a whole being 2.5 persons per household.

TABLE 5 AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE*

	2011	2016	2021
Average household size	2.3	2.2	2.2

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016 and 2021

4.3 Housing

Housing occupancy

The number of occupied dwellings in Mount Alexander on Census night 2021 was 4,737 (87.6% of private dwellings), with 478 dwellings unoccupied. This excludes visitor only and other non-classifiable households. This is similar to the occupancy of private dwellings in Victoria as a whole being 88.9% of all private dwellings being occupied.

TABLE 6 DWELLING COUNT OF PRIVATE DWELLINGS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE 2021

Dwelling count	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Occupied private dwellings	8,396	87.6
Unoccupied private dwellings	1,194	12.52
Total dwellings	9,590	100%

Source: ABS Census 2021

Housing type/structure

The dwelling stock in Mount Alexander Shire is primarily detached dwellings, which represents 96.2% of total dwelling stock. A further 3.3% of the dwelling stock is medium density (flats or apartment-style developments). In comparison to Victoria as a whole, the Shire has less medium density housing.

TABLE 7 DWELLING STRUCTURE OF PRIVATE DWELLINGS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE 2021 (EXCLUDING VISITOR ONLY AND OTHER NON-CLASSIFIABLE HOUSEHOLDS)

Dwelling structure	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Separate house	8,075	96.2
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse, etc.	257	3.1
Flat or apartment	13	0.2
Other dwelling	33	0.4
Total	8,378	100

Source: ABS Census 2021

*TABLE 8 DWELLING STRUCTURE OF OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS 2011 - 2021 MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE**

Dwelling structure	2011	2016	2021**
Separate house	6,636	6,949	8,075
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	127	271	257
Flat or apartment	262	56	13
Other / not stated	71	42	33
Total occupied private dwellings	7,096	7,318	8,075

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016, 2021

Number of bedrooms

Almost half (47%) of all private dwellings in the Shire have 3 bedrooms, with almost a further quarter (24.6%) being 4 bedroom houses.

As household sizes are generally on the decline, this is likely to mean that there is and will be a mismatch of dwelling supply and that in demand. It could also mean that smaller households don't necessarily seek smaller dwellings.

TABLE 9 NUMBER OF BEDROOMS IN DWELLINGS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE IN 2021 (EXCLUDING VISITOR ONLY AND OTHER NON-CLASSIFIABLE HOUSEHOLDS)

Number of bedrooms	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
None (includes studio apartments or bedsitters)	46	0.5
1 bedroom	335	4.2
2 bedrooms	1,870	22.3
3 bedrooms	3,949	47
4 or more bedrooms	2,066	24.6
Number of bedrooms not stated	109	1.3
Total	8,395	99.9%

Source: ABS Census 2021

Tenure type

For people living in occupied private dwellings in the Shire, the majority own their property outright (48.5%), and a third (33.4%) own their home with a mortgage. 15% of people rent their home.

TABLE 10 TENURE TYPES OF MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE'S OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS 2021 (EXCLUDING VISITOR ONLY AND OTHER NON-CLASSIFIABLE HOUSEHOLDS)

Tenure type	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Owned outright	4,068	48.5
Owned with a mortgage (a)	2,805	33.4
Rented (b)	1,259	15
Other/not stated:	262	3.1
Total	8,394	100%

Source: ABS Census 2021

Over the period 2011 to 2021, the number of occupied private dwellings in the Shire that are owned outright increased from 45.5% of occupied private dwellings, while the number rented reduced from 18.2%.

TABLE 11 TENURE TYPE OF OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE FROM 2011 - 2021

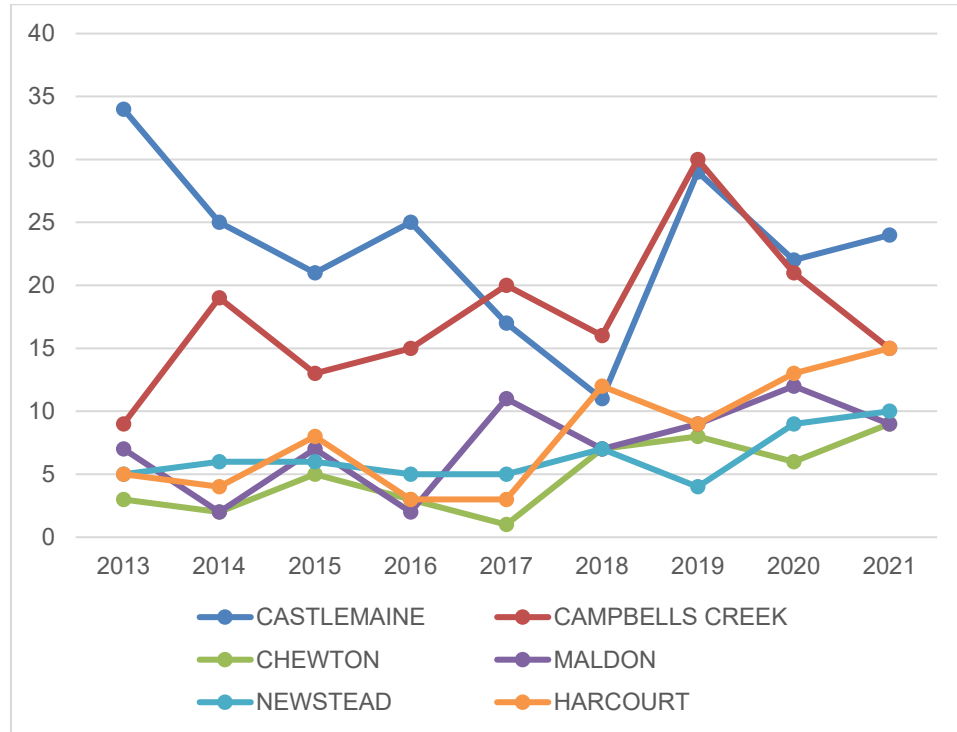
	2011	2016	2021
Owned outright	45.5%	44.8%	48.5%
Owned with a mortgage	32.6%	34%	33.4%
Rented	18.2%	17.5%	15%
Other/not stated	0.7%	0.8%	3.1%

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016 and 2021

New dwelling approvals

A review of dwelling approvals (through certificates of occupancy) from 2013 to 2021 highlights that most of the new dwellings constructed over this time were located in Castlemaine and Campbells Creek. Over the past three years there has been a notable increase in total number of dwelling approvals across the municipality. Recent subdivision activity within Harcourt has also supported strong growth over 2018 to 2020 in particular.

FIGURE 7 NEW DWELLING APPROVALS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE 2013 TO 2021



Source: Council Building Permit data 2022 (number of occupancy permits issued)

TABLE 12 NEW DWELLING APPROVALS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE 2012 TO 2021

Town	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Castlemaine	34	25	21	25	17	11	29	22	24
Campbells Creek	9	19	13	14	20	16	30	21	15
Chewton	3	2	5	3	1	7	8	6	9
Maldon	2	7	2	11	0	9	12	9	7
Newstead	6	6	5	5	0	4	9	10	5
Harcourt	4	8	3	3	0	9	13	15	5
Elphinstone	7	2	2	1	0	5	6	6	2
Taradale	0	1	1	4	0	1	3	4	1
Guildford	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Rest of Shire	10	16	34	14	29	52	60	33	37
Total	76	83	99	70	91	115	157	125	130

Source: Council Building Permit data 2022 (number of occupancy permits issued)

Housing stress (from REMPLAN Housing, 2023)

Housing stress relates to low-income households renting or paying a mortgage and their ability to meet their housing costs.

A household experiencing housing stress reflects a situation where the cost of housing (either as rent or mortgage repayments) is high relative to household income. Households in the lower 40% of income earners that are spending more than 30% of income on housing (rent or mortgage) are considered to be experiencing financial housing stress (the 30/40 housing stress rule).

Housing stress is calculated as a proportion of all dwellings, regardless of tenure. In contrast, mortgage stress is calculated as a proportion of households in dwellings paying a mortgage. Similarly, rental stress is calculated as a proportion of households in dwellings paying rent.

As at the 2021 Census, there were 808 dwellings in the Shire in housing stress (9%). This consisted of 296 in mortgage stress (10.5% of mortgaged dwellings), and 512 in rental stress (40% of rented dwellings). The area with the highest level of mortgage stress was Guildford (32.5%). The area with the lowest level of mortgage stress was Chewton (0%). The area with the highest level of rental stress was Chewton (100%). The area with the lowest level of rental stress was Taradale (0%).

Housing affordability (from REMPLAN Housing, 2023)

The term 'housing affordability' usually refers to the relationship between expenditure on housing (prices, mortgage payments or rents) and household incomes. This data provides insights to the areas where housing affordability is a potential issue.

The concept of housing affordability is different to the concept of 'affordable housing'. 'Affordable housing' refers to a spectrum of housing delivery models which focus on providing housing at financially sustainable costs to tenants or purchasers. The most common measure used in affordable housing delivery is that rent or mortgage repayments are less than 30% of household income. There are a range of models for delivering affordable housing that span from government subsidised

rental housing through to rent-to-buy and home equity schemes for purchasers.

REMPAN's housing affordability data includes property market sales transactions and rental listings for the last six years. The time series data highlights trends in terms of the cost of being able to rent or buy a home and the level of affordability by smaller area.

The widely adopted benchmark in determining if housing costs are affordable is if they cost less than 30% of household income. As housing markets operate regionally, calculations of very low-, low- and moderate-income households are based on two medians – one for metropolitan and one for rest of state.

For Mount Alexander the median household income is based on the Greater Capital City's Statistical Area (GCCSA) median household income 2016 data, adjusted for WPI (Wage Price Index) to date. The GCCSA data is used to allow context across all regions within the state, comparing on a like with like basis. This provides context for existing and potential future residents of the affordability of property in the Mount Alexander region versus other regions in the State.

The number of dwellings that are affordable has a strong relationship with income. The lower a family's household income, the fewer homes that are considered affordable to rent or buy. The data below is based on property market sales transactions and rental listings within the Shire for the past six years, and whether the housing costs associated with these are below 30% of the median income, therefore considered to be affordable. Thus, when referring to 'affordable dwellings sold', this means that the housing costs associated with those dwellings sold were below 30% of the GCCSA median household income. When referring to 'affordable rentals', this means that the rental costs associated with those rentals were below 30% of the GCCSA median household income.

In 2015 there were 261 dwellings sold in the Mount Alexander Shire which were affordable (i.e. dwellings where housing costs were determined to be below 30% of the median household income), representing 45% of all dwellings sold. This decreased to 84 affordable dwellings sold in 2021, representing 12% of all dwellings sold.

In 2015 there were 92 rentals which were affordable in Mount Alexander (i.e. where rental costs were below 30% of the median household income), representing 79% of all rentals. This decreased to 23 affordable rentals in 2021, representing 61% of all rentals.

Key population, household and housing data

- The population of the Mount Alexander Shire grew over the period 2006 to 2021 at an average annual rate of 1.24%. Approximately 65% of the population live in urban areas and almost half of the population live in Castlemaine or Campbells Creek.
- Mount Alexander Shire has an ageing population in comparison to Victoria as a whole. The median age in the Shire increased from 47 in 2011 to 51 years of age in 2021, and the proportion of people aged over 60 increased since 2011. As at the 2021 Census, the median age of the population in Victoria as a whole was 37 years of age.
- As at the 2021 Census, the average household size in the Shire is 2.1 persons per household. While most households in the Shire are family households, the number of lone person households is increasing and makes up 33.2% of all households as at the 2021 Census. This is higher than the proportion of lone person households in Victoria as a whole, being 24.7% of households.
- Most family households reside in separate houses with the majority of these being 'couple family no children'.
- With the majority of the dwelling stock in the Shire being detached dwellings (96.2%) and three and four bedroom houses (71.6%) there is a mismatch between the dwelling supply and household demand.
- 9% of dwellings in the Shire were in housing stress as of the 2021 Census.

- 12% of all dwellings sold in the Shire in 2021 were affordable dwellings (see definition above), decreasing from 45% of all dwellings sold in 2015.
- 61% of all rentals in the Shire in 2021 were affordable rentals (see definition above), decreasing from 79% of all rentals in 2015.

5. Population and housing forecasts

5.1 Introduction

Population and households projections for the Shire from to 2041 have been prepared by REMPLAN through REMPLAN Forecast. This includes projections for household types and sizes; and dwellings. These projections take into consideration trends for births, deaths and migration. Forecasts are conditioned against factors such as planning strategies, economic influences (major employment node in the future), development applications (high density seniors living or master-planned community), and supply constraints. This means the REMPLAN Forecasts can be impacted due by factors such as migration levels targeting specific demographics, new technology and different living arrangements. (REMPAN Forecast 2022).

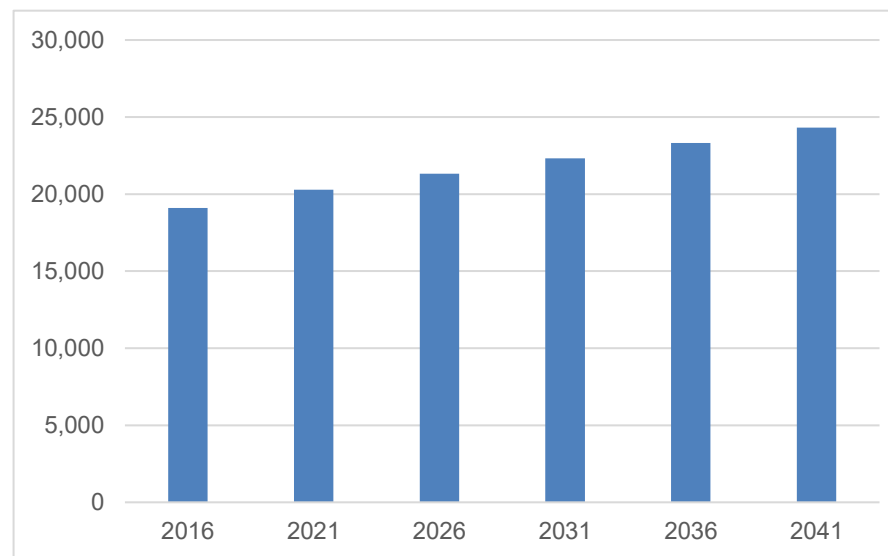
5.2 Overview

Forecast population

The population of the Mount Alexander Shire is projected to increase by 0.97% each year until 2041 when the population is projected to be 24,316 people.

Net migration contributes more to population growth than natural change (births less deaths). Over the 25 year forecast period net migration and natural change is projected to add around 7,202 and subtract around -1,680 respectively.

FIGURE 8 MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE POPULATION PROJECTIONS TO 2041



Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

TABLE 13 MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE FORECAST POPULATION AND DRIVERS OF POPULATION CHANGE

Population (persons)	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Population	19,097	20,289	21,321	22,315	23,320	24,316
Total change		1,192	1,032	994	1,005	996
due to natural change		-228	-245	-308	-391	-476
due to net migration		1,420	1,277	1,302	1,396	1,472
5 year annualised growth rate (%)		1.22%	1.00%	0.92%	0.88%	0.84%
20 year annualised growth rate (%)						0.97%

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

Forecast population by town

It is anticipated that Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to accommodate a greater proportion of new population in the Shire up until 2041, accounting for almost half of the projected population growth during this time. Harcourt is projected to account for almost 20% of the population growth.

TABLE 14 FORECAST POPULATION FOR TOWNS/AREAS

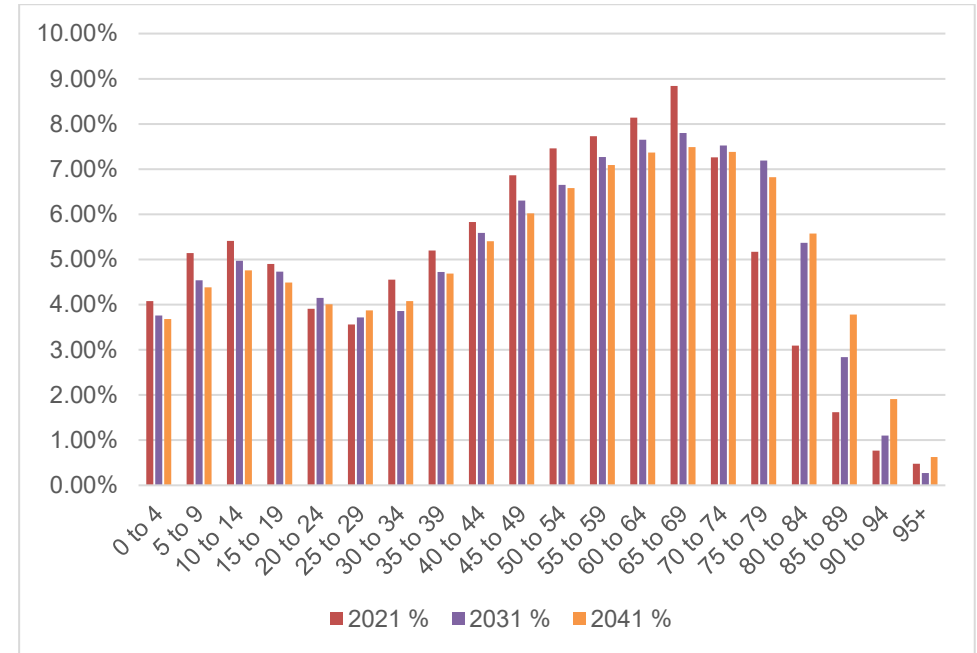
Population Projections	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Castlemaine	8,010	8,387	8,712	9,046	9,415
Campbells Creek	1,846	1,959	2,080	2,181	2,298
Chewton	513	554	588	619	650
Maldon	1,269	1,303	1,336	1,375	1,415
Newstead	676	733	783	824	864
Harcourt	677	849	1,043	1,265	1,454
Elphinstone	182	189	196	200	206
Taradale	152	163	174	190	201
Guildford	208	213	217	222	225
Calder Corridor Rural	3,164	3,298	3,436	3,569	3,660
Balance Rural	3,592	3,673	3,750	3,829	3,928
Total	20,289	21,321	22,315	23,320	24,316

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

Forecast population by age

The proportion of people aged between 0 and 19 and 35 to 69 is expected to reduce over time to 2041, while the proportion of people aged over 80 is anticipated to increase over time. This highlights that the ageing population trend is expected to continue into the future.

FIGURE 9 FORECAST POPULATION BY AGE – MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE



Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

TABLE 15 FORECAST POPULATION BY AGE (2021, 2031 AND 2041)

Population	2021	2031	2041
Projections	%	%	%
0 to 4	4.08%	3.76%	3.68%
5 to 9	5.14%	4.54%	4.38%
10 to 14	5.41%	4.97%	4.76%
15 to 19	4.90%	4.73%	4.49%
20 to 24	3.91%	4.15%	4.01%
25 to 29	3.56%	3.72%	3.87%
30 to 34	4.55%	3.86%	4.08%
35 to 39	5.20%	4.72%	4.69%
40 to 44	5.83%	5.59%	5.40%
45 to 49	6.86%	6.30%	6.02%
50 to 54	7.46%	6.65%	6.58%
55 to 59	7.73%	7.27%	7.09%
60 to 64	8.14%	7.65%	7.37%
65 to 69	8.84%	7.80%	7.49%
70 to 74	7.26%	7.52%	7.38%
75 to 79	5.17%	7.19%	6.82%
80 to 84	3.09%	5.37%	5.57%
85 to 89	1.62%	2.84%	3.78%
90 to 94	0.77%	1.10%	1.91%
95+	0.48%	0.27%	0.63%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

5.3 Forecast households

Forecast household types

The number of households is projected to increase across the Shire from 8,951 in 2021 to 11,270 by 2041. Almost half of these households are expected to reside in Castlemaine and Campbells Creek.

TABLE 16 FORECAST HOUSEHOLD GROWTH (2021, 2031, 2041)

Household Projections	2021	2031	2041
Castlemaine	3,482	3,940	4,325
Campbells Creek	771	939	1,086
Chewton	262	307	346
Maldon	660	710	761
Newstead	314	390	442
Harcourt	247	390	557
Elphinstone	80	87	93
Taradale	71	84	101
Guildford	106	112	116
Calder Corridor Rural	1,388	1,561	1,690
Balance Rural	1,570	1,697	1,753
Total	8,951	10,217	11,270

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

The proportion of lone households is projected to increase over time to 2041, while the proportion of couple family with children households is expected to reduce.

FIGURE 10 FORECAST HOUSEHOLD TYPES (2021, 2031, 2041)

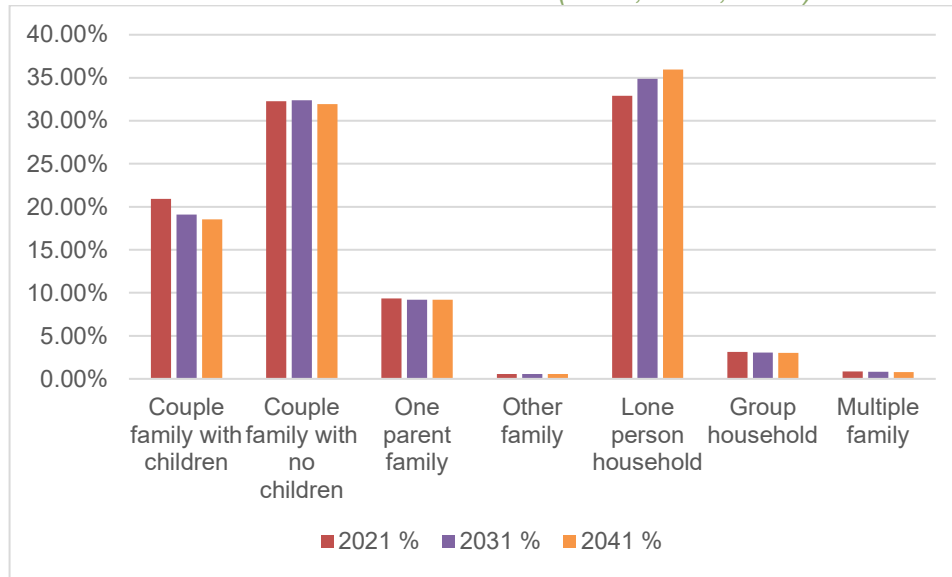


TABLE 17 FORECAST HOUSEHOLD TYPES (2021, 2031, 2041)

Household Projections	2021	2031	2041
	%	%	%
Couple family with children	20.93%	19.09%	18.54%
Couple family with no children	32.26%	32.37%	31.93%
One parent family	9.35%	9.21%	9.21%
Other family	0.55%	0.58%	0.58%
Lone person household	32.89%	34.88%	35.94%
Group household	3.15%	3.06%	3.02%
Multiple family	0.87%	0.81%	0.80%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

Forecast persons per dwelling

The average number of persons per dwelling is an important factor in determining demand for dwellings. In a regional area, such as Mount Alexander Shire, dwelling demand translates almost directly into demand for land given the lack of high-density dwelling development (REMPAN Land Supply and Demand Assessment Report 2022).

The average number of persons per dwelling across the Shire is forecast to decline from 2016 to 2041 from 2.18 persons per household to 2.05 persons per household.

TABLE 18 FORECAST AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2016 - 2041

	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Mount Alexander Shire	2.18	2.15	2.11	2.08	2.06	2.05

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

5.4 Forecast housing

Forecast housing types

The number of unoccupied dwellings are projected to increase from 2016 to 2041 by 270, an increase of 19.11%.

TABLE 19 FORECAST DWELLING TYPES 2016 - 2041

Dwelling Types	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Occupied private dwellings	8,339	9,020	9,640	10,234	10,802	11,325
Unoccupied private dwellings	1,413	1,483	1,546	1,601	1,683	1,764
Non-private dwellings	4	4	4	5	6	6
Total	9,756	10,507	11,190	11,840	12,491	13,095

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

Forecast housing structure

The number of detached dwellings/ separate houses is expected to continue as the prevailing dwelling structure in the Shire, making up 94.96% of all dwelling stock by 2041. Medium density housing is projected to increase slightly however it is projected to make up just 4.3% of dwelling stock in 2041.

TABLE 20 FORECAST HOUSING STRUCTURES 2016 - 2041

Dwelling Structures	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
High density	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medium density	466	540	564	564	564	564
Other	90	90	90	90	90	90
Separate house	9,196	9,873	10,532	11,181	11,831	12,435
Non-private dwellings	4	4	4	5	6	6
Total	9,756	10,507	11,190	11,840	12,491	13,095

Source: REMPLAN Forecast 2022

Key population, household and housing forecasts

- The population of the Mount Alexander Shire is projected to increase by 0.97% each year until 2041 when the population is projected to be 24,316 people.
- It is anticipated that Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to accommodate a greater proportion of new population in the Shire up until 2041, accounting for almost half of the projected population growth during this time. Harcourt is projected to account for almost 20% of the population growth.
- The proportion of people aged between 0 and 19 and 35 to 69 is expected to reduce over time to 2041, while the proportion of people aged over 80 is anticipated to increase over time.
- The proportion of lone households is projected to increase over time to 2041, while the proportion of couple family with children households is expected to reduce.
- The average number of persons per dwelling across the Shire is forecast to decline from 2016 to 2041 from 2.18 persons per household to 2.05 persons per household.
- The number of unoccupied dwellings are projected to increase from 2016 to 2041 by 270, an increase of 19.11%.
- The number of detached dwellings/ separate houses is expected to continue as the prevailing dwelling structure in the Shire, making up 94.96% of all dwelling stock by 2041. Medium density housing is projected to increase slightly however it is projected to make up just 4.3% of dwelling stock in 2041.

6. Municipal land demand and supply analysis

A detailed municipal land supply and demand assessment has been undertaken by REMPLAN (see Appendix A).

This confirms that the Shire has sufficient residential land to meet the projected population growth over the next 15 years.

The approach involved:

- A supply assessment that reviewed and assessed the development potential of all residential land within the Shire at a parcel level, while having regard to development constraints.
- A demand assessment that was undertaken as part of the preparation of population and housing forecasts for the Shire. Drivers of land demand include a combination of a range of factors, such as the growth or decline in overall population (including migration), the structure of the population, and average household size.

Refer to Appendix A for more details.

Key findings of the Shire-wide land supply and demand assessment

- There is more than 30 years of land supply in the Shire for residential development. This meets the state planning policy that requires Councils to plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15 year period on a municipal basis (rather than town by town).
- The total supply across the Shire up until 2041 is 4,342 lots, with the majority of this supply provided within Castlemaine and Campbells Creek, both accounting for around 55 per cent of residential land in the Shire. Other supply is provided through smaller isolated parcels spread throughout various townships.
- The forecast demand is 2,750 lots through to 2041.
- Supply of land in smaller townships (including Elphinstone, Taradale and Guildford) is relatively low but has sustained low annual demand. Small changes in demand however could reduce the number of years supply relatively quickly.
- Castlemaine (excluding Campbells Creek) has the highest levels of demand (annual average of 46 lots a year) and the second lowest years of supply (around 25 years).
- Harcourt is the most constrained township in terms of supply, with 20 years of residential land supply to meet forecast demand.

7. Towns of Mount Alexander Shire: Strategic directions and key issues and opportunities

7.1 Current strategic directions

The following provides a review of the current strategic directions for settlement at Clause 02.03-1 of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

General

Having regard to current state, regional and planning strategic and policy context, population and housing data, trends and forecasts, and the municipal land supply and demand assessment, the current strategic directions for settlement planning in the Shire remain relevant. An assessment of each of these is provided below.

Strategic direction 1 (SD1): Discouraging the rezoning of land for urban purposes outside the urban/township boundaries.

This direction continues to be relevant and is supported by state planning policy, specifically Clause 11.01-1S that aims to create and reinforce settlement boundaries, and limit urban sprawl and direct growth into existing settlements. No change to this direction is required.

Strategic direction 2 (SD2): Discouraging the rezoning or development of land for low density residential development if the land is likely to be required for future urban development.

This direction continues to be relevant and is supported by state planning policy, specifically at Clause 11.01-1S that aims to ensure land that may be required for future urban expansion is not compromised. It is also supported by the strategies of Clause 11.02-1S (Supply of urban land), including restricting rural residential development that would compromise future development at higher densities.

Strategic direction 3 (SD3): Encouraging infill and higher density development in the Shire's towns, particularly in Castlemaine.

This direction continues to be relevant and supports the Council Plan 2021-2025, specifically the strategy that seeks to encourage diverse housing options and infill residential development in appropriate locations. It also supports state planning policy, specifically at Clause 11.01-1S that aims facilitate the sustainable growth and development of Victoria through a number of strategies and Clause 11.03-1S that aims to encourage the concentration of major retail, residential, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments into activity centres that are highly accessible to the community. This development is to be managed and guided by future strategic work, including housing and neighbourhood character strategies.

Strategic direction (SD4): Limiting residential densities in unsewered small settlements and townships with effluent disposal limitations.

This direction continues to be relevant and supports state planning policy at Clause 11.02-1 that requires planning for urban growth to consider the service limitations and the costs of providing infrastructure as well as the limits of land capability and natural hazards and environmental quality.

Strategic direction 5 (SD5): Supporting urban consolidation and expansion at Castlemaine.

This direction continues to be relevant and supports regional planning policy and the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan that identifies Castlemaine as being of regional significance in terms of growth.

Strategic direction 6 (SD6): Concentrating growth in Diamond Gully as Castlemaine's primary urban growth area.

This direction continues to be relevant at this point in time as there is available residential land supply in Diamond Gully (refer to Appendix A). This will need to be revisited as part of future strategic planning work, specifically the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy should this land be developed and subsequently the available land supply is reduced or depleted.

Strategic direction 7 (SD7): Encouraging growth in townships such as Harcourt, Newstead, Elphinstone and Taradale (subject to providing reticulated sewerage to Taradale and Elphinstone).

This direction continues to be relevant and is supported by the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan that identifies Harcourt as a town that can accommodate growth. Growth in Newstead can also continue to be supported, however this needs appropriate management and guidance through a housing and neighbourhood character strategy and an updated framework plan. As the towns of Elphinstone and Taradale do not have access to reticulated water or sewer, growth should not be encouraged in these towns until the provision of this infrastructure.

Strategic direction 8 (SD8): Limiting urban expansion in Maldon.

This direction continues to be relevant due to a number of factors constraining Maldon's urban expansion including bushfire risk at the edges of town, and the protection of native vegetation, heritage and significant landscapes.

7.2 Castlemaine (including McKenzie Hill, Diamond Gully and Campbells Creek)

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Castlemaine (including Campbell's Creek) is the main population centre in Mount Alexander Shire. It is the key administrative and commercial centre for the Shire.

Diamond Gully is Castlemaine's primary urban growth area. The Diamond Gully Structure Plan (DGSP) identifies the preferred urban form for the area, and provides for connectivity and linkages within the area and externally to Castlemaine and Campbells Creek. The DGSP promotes subdivision and residential development in the context of the protection of significant vegetation and prioritises the protection of human life in areas at risk from bushfire.

Role and strategic directions

Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to be the main population centre in the Shire into the future. This is supported by the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014) that identifies Castlemaine as having regional significance in terms of growth.

Relevant strategic directions: SD1, SD2, SD3, SD5, SD6

Key issues and opportunities

Castlemaine is to continue to provide the main source of land for residential development and accounts for around 57% of the Shire's urban land supply (Shire Land Supply and Demand Assessment, REMPLAN 2022). While there is limited capacity for expansion due to bushfire hazards surrounding the town, there are infill development opportunities within the existing urban areas close to key facilities and services that will accommodate a large share of future demand. This is supported by existing state and local planning policy, and will be guided by the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy that is currently being prepared in accordance with the State Government's Planning Practice Notes 90 and 91.

It is also important that planning for future housing has regard to heritage values; the heritage study for Castlemaine is currently outdated and not comprehensive. The Strategy will also consider how to create bushfire-ready communities within the fringe areas of the town with future development/help to guide development on the fringes, particularly with regards to settlement planning at the bushfire interface. As it is projected that Castlemaine will maintain a relatively high proportion of lone person households to 2041, there is an opportunity to investigate opportunities for more diverse housing including smaller dwellings. Future planning should also have regard to the Castlemaine transfer station (formerly landfill) and Castlemaine Wastewater Treatment Plant, both located in the Diamond Gully area.

Further settlement planning work

- Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (informed by Bushfire Risk Assessment).
- Heritage study for Castlemaine.
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy.

7.4 Maldon

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Maldon is the second largest township in the Shire. The town has been recognised for its heritage significance. The retail centre in High Street, Maldon, is the second largest retail centre in the Shire. It provides local shopping needs for the township and the rural district in the north western part of the Shire and serves an important tourism role.

Role and strategic directions

Maldon will continue to be a key retail centre in the Shire to support residents in the town and surrounding rural areas, and will also continue to serve an important tourism role. Urban expansion will continue to be limited in Maldon due to the bushfire hazards surrounding the town and to protect identified, significant landscapes.

Relevant strategic directions: SD1, SD2, SD8

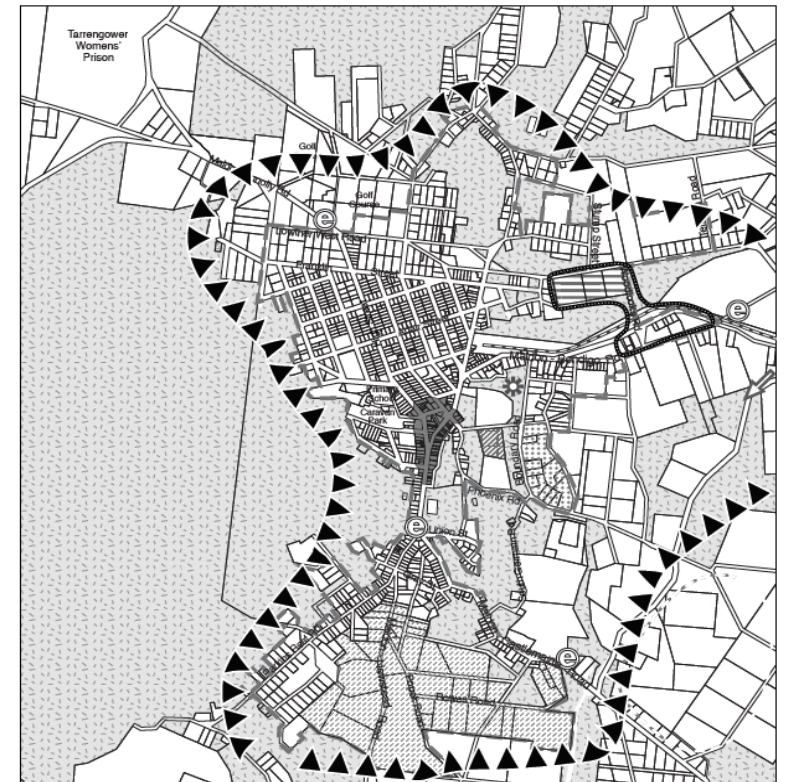
Key issues and opportunities

There is available land supply of 328 lots in Maldon, which accounts for 9.3% of total land supply in the Shire. Approximately half of this supply is available as existing lots (retail with title). This demonstrates that there are opportunities for new urban development within the existing township boundary, subject to planning controls and guidelines applicable to each site that seek to protect heritage and landscape values (Heritage Overlay, Significant Landscape Overlay, Maldon Design Guidelines) and ensure development addresses environmental risks (Erosion Management Overlay, Bushfire Management Overlay). Given that Maldon is also expected to maintain the lowest number of persons per dwelling into the future with a high proportion of lone person households, opportunities to encourage more diverse housing including smaller dwellings should be investigated. A review of the residential zoning is needed as the General Residential Zone may no longer appropriate given the State Government's guidance with PPN 91.

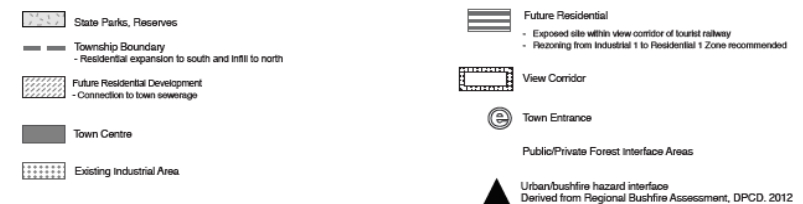
Further settlement planning work

- Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (informed by Bushfire Risk Assessment).
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy.

FIGURE 13 MALDON FRAMEWORK PLAN (AT CLAUSE 02.04)



PLAN 4: MALDON FRAMEWORK PLAN



7.5 Newstead

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Newstead is a local community centre, on the Loddon River. It provides services to residents of the township itself and the surrounding rural area.

Role and strategic directions

Newstead will continue to be a local community centre providing services to residents in the town and surrounding rural areas. Growth in Newstead is to continue to be encouraged, however this needs to be carefully managed through further strategic work.

Relevant strategic directions: SD1, SD2, SD7

Key issues and opportunities

Newstead has the capacity for growth: it is well serviced and has good community infrastructure and local shopping facilities. There is available residential land supply of 306 lots in Newstead, accounting for 8.7% of the total land supply in the Shire. This excludes areas where flood risk is expected around the Loddon River. Further strategic work is needed however to manage and guide future growth including a detailed bushfire risk assessment and flood study (to inform planning overlays) to ensure that development is directed to low risk areas, and a housing and neighbourhood character strategy to address future housing needs and provide clear guidance for future residential development in terms of its location and built form.

Further settlement planning work

- Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (informed by Bushfire Risk Assessment)
- Flood study
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy

FIGURE 14 NEWSTEAD FRAMEWORK PLAN (AT CLAUSE 02.04)



PLAN 5: NEWSTEAD FRAMEWORK PLAN



7.6 Harcourt

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Harcourt is a local community centre, identified as a place for population growth in the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan. Harcourt is located next to Mount Alexander and is well placed to take advantage of tourism opportunities. The area is well known for its apple and pear orchards, providing a significant contribution to the State's apple supply.

Role and strategic directions

Harcourt will continue to be a local community centre and place for growth. This is to be guided by Plan Harcourt (2020). Tourism and agricultural opportunities will also continue to be encouraged.

Relevant strategic directions: SD1, SD2, SD7

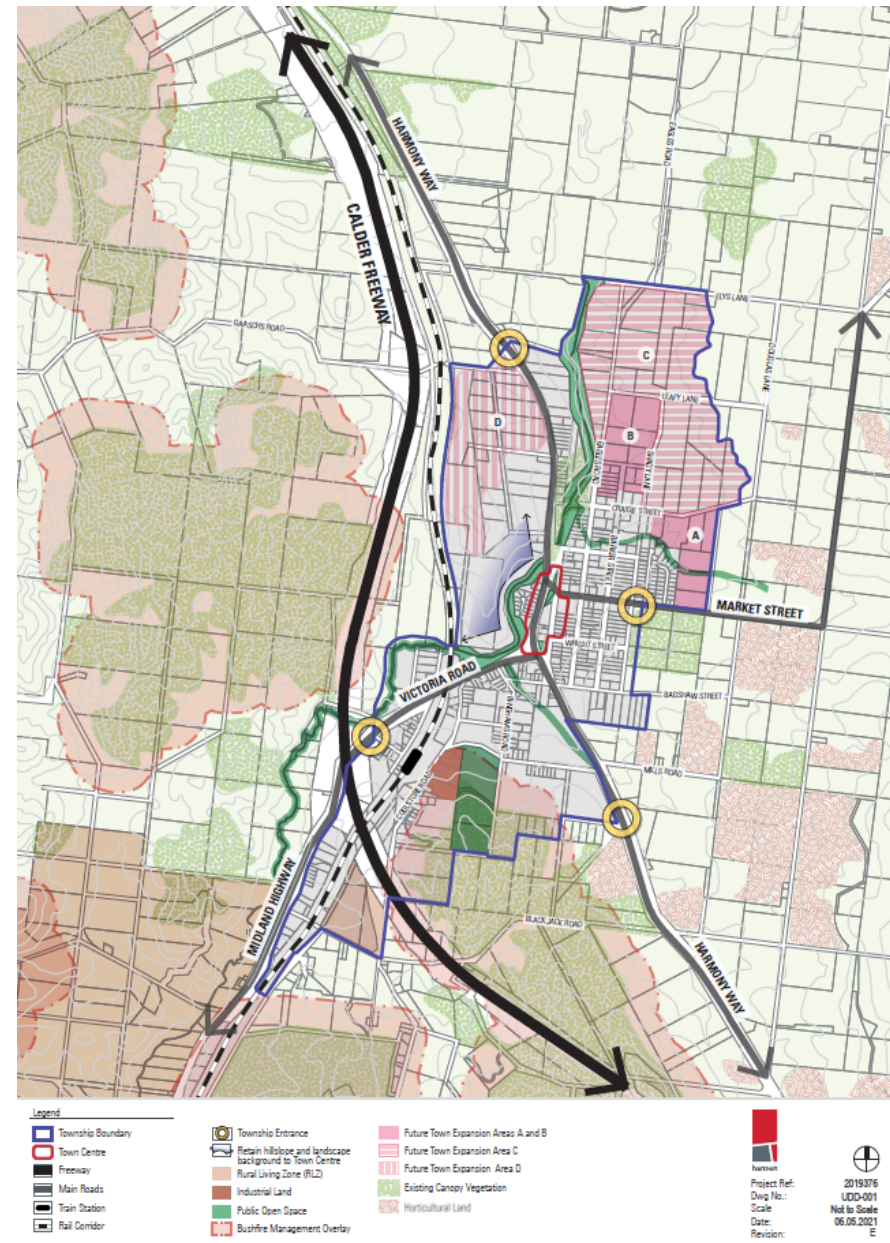
Key issues and opportunities

Harcourt is forecast to have the second highest increase in total population to 2041 (behind Castlemaine) and is also expected to maintain the highest average household size ranging from 2.51 in 2021 down to 2.55 in 2041. This is attributed to the higher proportion of family households with children than other townships (REMPAN, 2022). Plan Harcourt (2020) and Planning Scheme Amendment C94malx provide the planning framework for the future growth and development of Harcourt. This includes the proposed rezoning of two areas of land from Farming Zone to Neighbourhood Residential Zone, and rezoning land within the town centre to Commercial 1 Zone to consolidate and create a defined commercial town centre.

Further settlement planning work

- The implementation of Plan Harcourt (2020) through Planning Scheme Amendment C94malx
- Flood study (commenced)
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy

FIGURE 15 HARCOURT FRAMEWORK PLAN (PROPOSED THROUGH AMENDMENT C94MALX)



7.7 Taradale

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Taradale is a small village at the southern edge of the Shire along the Calder corridor. The town is located along Back Creek which feeds into the Coliban River. A significant landmark of the town is the Taradale Viaduct along the Melbourne to Bendigo railway line, which reaches a height of approximately 36 metres.

Role and strategic directions

While Taradale is identified as a town where growth is to be encouraged, this is subject to the provision of reticulated sewerage. Taradale will therefore continue its role as a small village at this point in time.

Relevant strategic directions: SD4, SD7

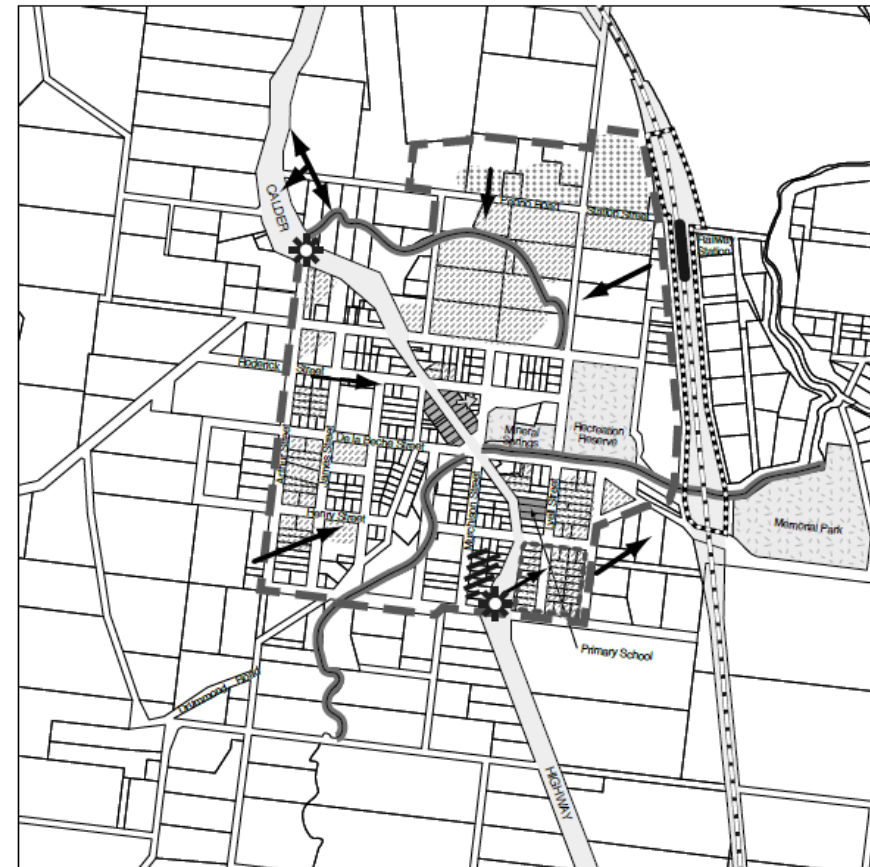
Key issues and opportunities

Currently with the absence of reticulated sewerage, environmental risks associated with on-site domestic wastewater management limit its capacity to grow, particularly given its location in an open potable water supply catchment. Taradale is also impacted by bushfire hazards, mainly to the west where intensification of development should be discouraged (Terramatrix, 2020). Should reticulated sewerage be provided in the future, the town's growth needs to be carefully managed to ensure it's directed to low bushfire and flood risk areas, and has regard to identified heritage values and neighbourhood character.

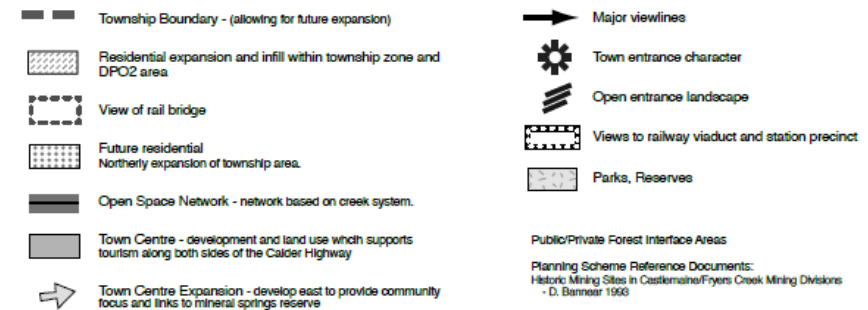
Further settlement planning work

- Update framework plan and review existing planning policies and controls
- Update flooding provisions
- Investigate wastewater issues and opportunities
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy

FIGURE 16 TARADALE FRAMEWORK PLAN (AT CLAUSE 02.04)



PLAN 7: TARADALE FRAMEWORK PLAN



7.8 Elphinstone

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

Elphinstone is a small village along the Calder Corridor. Located at the intersection of the Pyrenees and Calder Highways, the town is well connected to transport. The railway line also runs through the centre of the town, creating a physical separation.

Role and strategic directions

Like Taradale, while growth is encouraged in Elphinstone, however this is subject to reticulated sewerage.

Relevant strategic directions: SD4, SD7

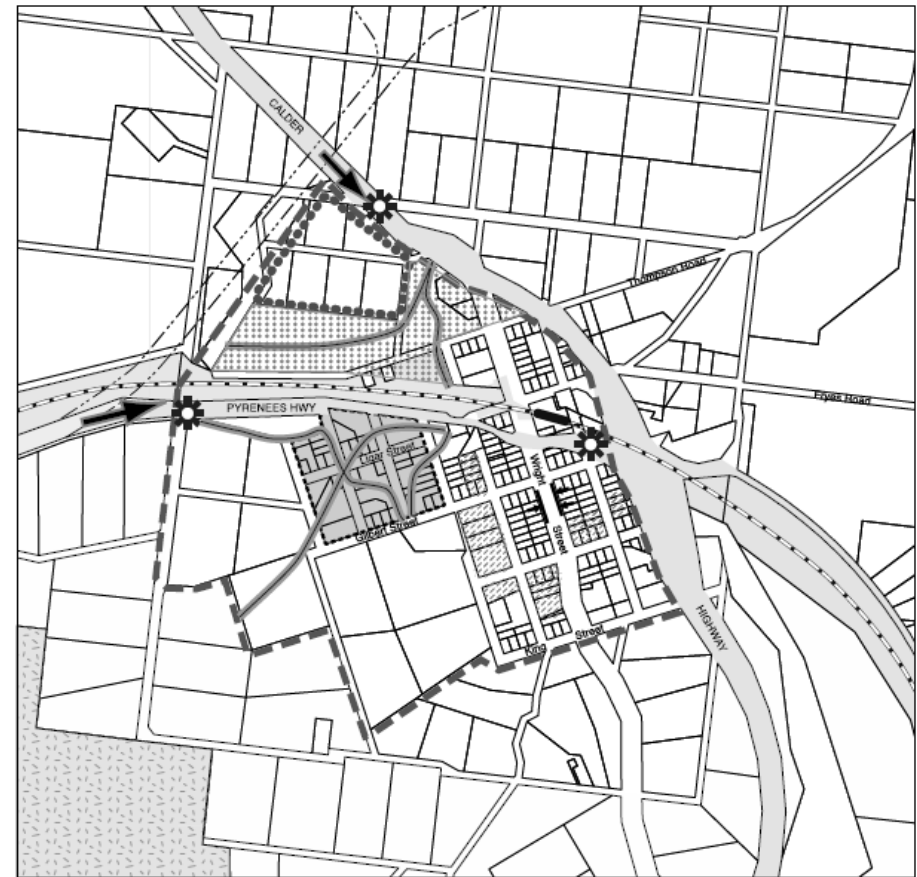
Key issues and opportunities

Elphinstone shares similar issues and opportunities to Taradale: the absence of reticulated sewerage limits its capacity to grow and bushfire hazards (mainly to the west of the town) will further constrain future development. Like Taradale however, there are opportunities should these issues be addressed given Elphinstone's proximity to key transport corridors. The planning scheme also supports the provision of sewerage and other infrastructure to Elphinstone to allow for industrial development, however there is currently no land zoned industrial. This is to be reviewed as part of the upcoming Shire-wide industrial land use strategy.

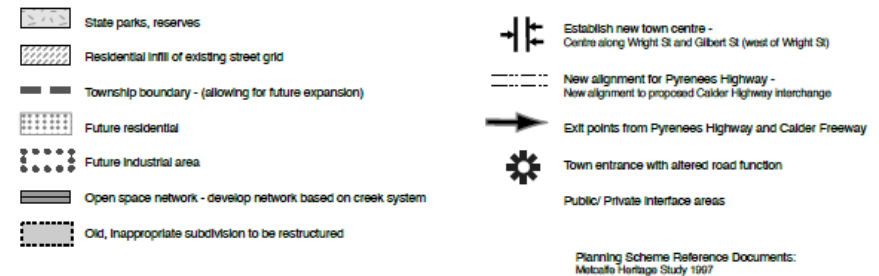
Further settlement planning work

- Update framework plan and review existing planning policies and controls
- Investigate wastewater issues and opportunities
- Shire-wide Industrial land use strategy

FIGURE 17 ELPHINSTONE FRAMEWORK PLAN (AT CLAUSE 02.04)



PLAN 8: ELPHINSTONE FRAMEWORK PLAN



7.9 Small townships/localities

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Clause 02.03-1

There are also small rural communities at Baringhup, Fryerstown, Guildford, Metcalfe, Sutton Grange, Vaughan and Yapeen.

Role and strategic directions

Limiting residential growth in these townships is appropriate.

Relevant strategic directions: SD4

Key issues and opportunities

Residential development will continue to be limited in these small towns given the absence of key infrastructure and services including reticulated sewerage. Many of these townships are also highly affected by bushfire hazards, particularly Fryerstown, Vaughan and Yapeen. Current planning policy for infrastructure supports investigation into wastewater management in Guildford given the town's opportunities to accommodate population growth (although the priority for such investigations is for the towns of Taradale and Elphinstone as per strategic direction 7).

Further settlement planning work

- Review existing planning policies, zoning and controls
- Investigation of wastewater issue and challenges

Key conclusions: Settlement planning strategic directions

- The current strategic directions for settlement planning in the Shire remain relevant, having regard to planning policy context, population, household and housing data and forecasts and the municipal land supply and demand assessment.
- Castlemaine and Campbells Creek will continue to be the main population centre in the Shire into the future. This is supported by the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014) that identifies Castlemaine as having regional significance in terms of growth.
- Maldon will continue to be a key retail centre in the Shire to support residents in the town and surrounding rural areas, and will also continue to serve an important tourism role. Urban expansion will continue to be limited in Maldon due to the bushfire hazards surrounding the town and to protect identified, significant landscapes.
- Newstead will continue to be a local community centre providing services to residents in the town and surrounding rural areas. Growth in Newstead is to continue to be encouraged, however this needs to be carefully managed through further strategic work.
- Harcourt will continue to be a local community centre and place for growth. This is to be guided and managed through Plan Harcourt (2020) and its implementation via Planning Scheme Amendment C94malx. Tourism and agricultural opportunities will also continue to be encouraged in and around Harcourt.
- Taradale and Elphinstone will continue to be small villages where growth is to be encouraged subject to reticulated sewerage.

8. Recommendations for strategic planning work program for settlement planning

This Assessment has helped to identify key settlement planning projects in the Shire for inclusion in the strategic planning work program for the 2022 to 2026 period. This includes the preparation of housing and neighbourhood character strategies for towns in the Shire that have some capacity for housing, a small towns strategy (for towns with constraints to growth) a Shire-wide industrial land use strategy and a rural living assessment, followed by a further review of the Shire-wide settlement directions and municipal land supply and demand. These projects have been prioritised in a way that considers development pressures and internal resourcing requirements. Community and other key stakeholder engagement is to play a central role in the preparation of these projects.

This list is not exhaustive (i.e. it is not a comprehensive list of Council's strategic planning work that impacts on settlement planning) and it is subject to altering over time. This may be as a result of changes to state planning or regional policy or guidance, or changes in the political, economic, social and environmental landscape.

TABLE 21 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: KEY SETTLEMENT PLANNING PROJECTS

Project	Expected outputs	Indicative timeframe
Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy: Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire risk assessment (key input) • Housing and neighbourhood character strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated graphical framework plan/s - Updated local planning policy - Recommendations for rezoning of residential land (with consideration given to the current suite of residential zones and guidance on applying these) - Recommendations for the application of new overlays/ changes to existing overlays • Design Guidelines 	Commenced Mid-2021
Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy: Maldon and Newstead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire risk assessment (key input) • Housing and neighbourhood character strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated graphical framework plan/s - Updated local planning policy - Recommendations for rezoning of residential land (with consideration given to the current suite of residential zones and guidance on applying these) - Recommendations for the application of new overlays/ changes to existing overlays 	Commence 2023
Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies: Implementation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report consolidating key findings and recommendations of the housing and neighbourhood character strategies (Castlemaine, Campbells Creek, Chewton, Maldon and Newstead), including a municipal-wide bushfire analysis (drawing together settlement based assessments). 	Commence 2024
Small towns strategy (Taradale, Elphinstone, Baringhup, Fryerstown, Guildford, Metcalfe, Sutton Grange, Vaughan and Yapeen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small towns strategy - Updated graphical framework plan/s (if exist) - Updated local planning policy - Recommendations for zoning (if needed) - Recommendations for the application of new overlays/ changes to existing overlays 	Commence 2024
Shire-wide industrial land use strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial land supply and demand assessment • Industrial land strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendations for underutilised or vacant industrial-zoned land - Recommendations for separation distances/ buffers (to protect industrial from encroachment of sensitive uses) - Recommendations for design guidelines for industrial areas - Set of criteria that leads to identification of suitable industrial sites and recommendations for appropriate zoning to facilitate future industrial use and development 	Commence 2023
Rural living assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural living supply and demand assessment • Recommendations for future rural living strategy 	Commence 2023
Review of Shire-wide settlement directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Mount Alexander Shire Settlement Planning Assessment • Land supply and demand assessment 	Commence 2026

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